



MUSIC FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts

Jonathan Stern

AMERICAN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS SERIES No. 7

For many New Yorkers of a certain age, mention of Lewisohn Stadium conjures many fond memories of concerts of beautiful music performed in most cases by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra on warm summer evenings outdoors. *Music for the American People: The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts* brings back those memories while introducing them to those who are either too young to remember or were born years after the Stadium's razing in 1973. The book focuses on the conductors, soloists, and repertoire in a way never undertaken before. While the book explores the Stadium Concerts classical orchestra canon to a large extent, author Jonathan Stern emphasizes in particular the effect the festival had on American music. The book discusses how the Stadium Concerts began in an era in which American classical music was championed like it rarely has been. It also makes the case that the Stadium Concerts may have done more for contemporary American music than any other musical institution of the early twentieth century through its frequent advocacy of the music of George Gershwin. This advocacy was soon taken up by other summer orchestra festivals that were founded after the birth of the Stadium Concerts. Readers will learn how the Stadium Concerts coped with the challenges faced by America in general, not only surviving wars and the Great Depression but even thriving artistically and otherwise during these troubling times. Lewisohn Stadium was a summer home away from home for millions of New Yorkers, enabling them to put aside their differences and join together in enjoying great music performed by many of the world's leading performers. In an era when people from all walks of life sought to better themselves in ways not often seen today, New Yorkers often said to each other, "Meet me at the Stadium." As such, *Music for the American People: The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts* fills a much-needed void in music and New York City scholarship while recounting a particularly happy chapter in the history of New York City culture.

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ERRATA

p. xi, end of the second line of the second paragraph: change 'five' to 'six'.

p. xi, fn. 4: delete entire second sentence ('During the final seasons ... Saturdays').

p. 8, fn. number 14: change 'greeting to 'greeted'.

p. 60: Last paragraph: change 'Young Person's' to 'Young People's'.

p. 129, chapter title: change '1944' to '1945'.

p. 129, end of first paragraph, p. 132, lines 15 and 17, p. 136, line 28, and p. 139, line 5: change 'music directors' to 'musical directors'.

p. 129: 3rd paragraph, 7th line and 4th line from end, p. 130, 2nd line of last complete paragraph, and p. 153, penultimate line: change 'six' to 'seven'.

p. 130, last complete paragraph: change last sentence to 'Richard Strauss was represented largely by three symphonic poems, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Juan*, and *Death and Transfiguration*, all well-established in the canon by this time'.

p. 132, lines 20 and 23, p. 134, line 20, p. 186, line 16 and 18, and p. 187, line 26: change 'music director' to 'musical director'.

p. 153: The 2nd paragraph is a quotation; should be suitably indented and offset.

Music for the American People

The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts



The Stadium audience facing the platform.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives
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John Graziano, Series Editor

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For my parents, Marcia and Richard Stern,
for John Graziano,
and for the students of Celia Cruz Bronx
High School of Music for showing me that
Maestro Willem van Hoogstraten was right
when he said that popular music means good music.

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This book is about the first twentieth century summer music festival involving a major American symphony orchestra—in this case, America's oldest orchestra in continuous existence, the New York Philharmonic Society. Much of the primary resources were at the New York Philharmonic Archives, which contains scrapbooks of reviews and articles pertaining to the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts compiled by the members of the Stadium Committee from 1924 to 1964. The Archives also owns virtually every program for every concert. Consequently, my research flowed rather smoothly. For their help and generosity, I would like to thank Archivist Barbara Haws and Associate Archivists Richard Wandel and Gabryel Smith. Special thanks are also due to former Archives volunteer Roma Korris, who saved me a lot of busywork by typing up lists of the Stadium conductors, repertoire, and soloists from 1922 to 1962. From these large lists, I was able to create a master list, citing each performer and composition for each concert. Currently, the New York Philharmonic archivists are making these programs available on their website, archives.nyphil.org.

Outside of the Philharmonic Archives, several individuals offered valuable assistance. John Pennino, Metropolitan Opera Archivist, alerted me to the list of Metropolitan Opera Stadium concerts of the summers of 1965 and 1966 located on the Company's official website. Family friend Nancy Milstein was a godsend when it came to issues pertaining to my computer and printer. I also would like to mention other friends who gave me some good advice throughout the writing of this book: Dr. Stephen Danyko, Dr. Sonia Kulchycky, Dr. Jim Leach and Dr. Julia Leach, Diana Lennon and the members of the Greenburgh Writers' Community, Sarita Melkon Maldjian, Miriam Margolis, Robert Novick, Rudolph Rinaldi, Dr. William Rodriguez, Dr. David Rosenthal (my godfather), Dr. Atanas Serbezov, Penelope Smetters-Jacono, Rod Stewart, Dr. Harold Wechsler and his wife, Dr. Lynn Gordon-Wechsler. Steve LaCoste, Archivist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, was nice enough to send me a brochure about the Hollywood Bowl. Ethan Allred, marketing manager of the Oregon Symphony, sent me interesting information about Willem van Hoogstraten. Elvis Balkaltis of the CUNY Graduate Center's Mina Rees Library was a particularly helpful librarian. Sam Yurow gave me information about Robin Hood Dell's history. Former New York Philharmonic musicians Stanley Drucker and Morris Lang pleasurably provided me with their unique perspectives of the Stadium Concerts.

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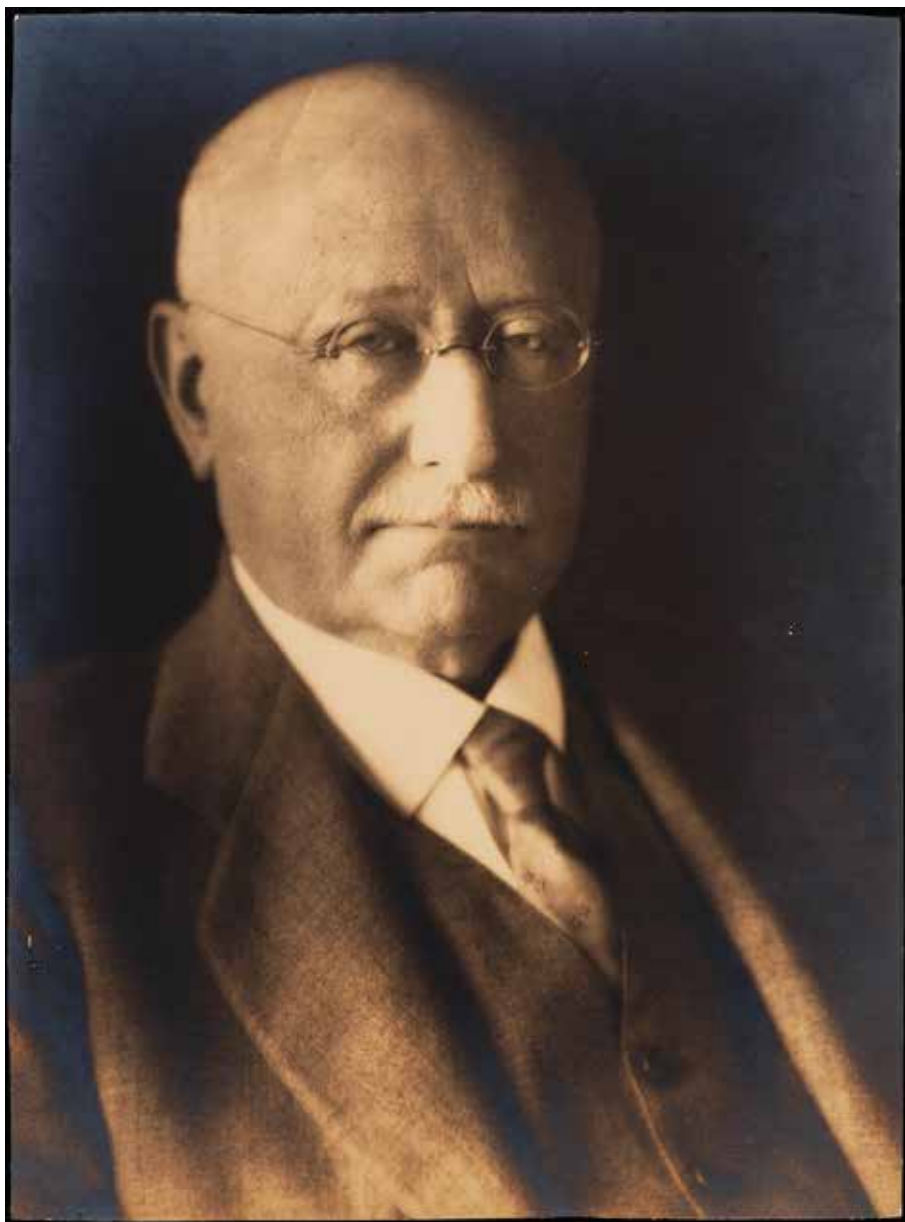


Figure 1: Copper magnate Adolph Lewisohn, after whom Lewisohn Stadium was named, became an enthusiastic supporter of the Stadium Concerts after initial misgivings.

Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York (ID: F2012.58.760).

Introduction

Our music is a constant in this vale of tears. Here is order, supreme order in a crazy world. If what I do has a small part in enriching someone's existence, it is manna from heaven.

—Robert Boyd, Assistant Principal Trombone, New York Philharmonic, 1945-46; Principal Trombone, Cleveland Orchestra, 1948-89.¹

Several years after construction began for an athletic field at City College of New York, school officials conceived the idea that it might serve as an outdoor concert venue during the summer months. The result—an athletic field, the 6,000-seat Lewisohn Stadium,² named after its principal benefactor, Adolph Lewisohn, and modeled somewhat along the lines of an ancient Roman coliseum—became that and much more. In addition to showcasing dance, theatre, and other orchestral concerts from its opening in 1915, Lewisohn Stadium was for over forty years (1922-1964) the summer home of America's oldest continuous symphony orchestra, the New York Philharmonic. More importantly, the Stadium Concerts audiences witnessed a particularly impressive and innovative array of talent, creative as well as interpretive. For nearly fifty years, audiences of all social and ethnic backgrounds attended concerts that, together, summed up much of the course of twentieth century American serious music at minimal cost for admittance.³

At 8:30 p.m. every summer night (seven days a week throughout the twenties and thirties into the later forties, from which point concerts were given only five times a week),⁴ Stadium audiences saw many of the finest conductors of the century direct the New York Philharmonic. Such maestros included regular conductors Willem van Hoogstraten and Alexander Smallens, about whom little has been written thus far. Other podium legends included Pierre Monteux, Eugene Ormandy, Fritz

¹ The Junior Committee of The Cleveland Orchestra with portraiture by Herbert Ascherman, Jr. *Fanfare: Portraits of the Cleveland Orchestra* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Junior Committee of The Cleveland Orchestra, 1984), 109.

² <http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/plazasite/plazahistory/history1.htm>. Over ten to fifteen thousand folding seats were placed on the Stadium field for concerts to bring the total to nearly 20,000 seats. Publicity and newspaper articles throughout the years claimed that certain standing-room-only concerts were attended by as many as 22,000 music lovers. The actual number of seats used at Stadium concerts remains a mystery.

³ Throughout the bulk of the Stadium's life, concertgoers paid anywhere from twenty-five cents to fifty cents for tickets in the rocky seats. During the final years of the concerts, ticket prices increased to as much as \$1.50 for seats on the field.

⁴ The Stadium Concerts ran for seven weeks in 1918. During the final seasons, concerts took place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Seasons were eight weeks long during the Stadium's first several decades, but only six weeks long during its final ten years.

Reiner, Sir Thomas Beecham, and, of course, such New York Philharmonic music directors as Leonard Bernstein, a child prodigy named Lorin Maazel, and in his New York debut, Zubin Mehta. The finest instrumental soloists came to uptown New York during these summers along with glamorous vocalists of the contemporary operatic stage. These performers constitute a summation of the twentieth-century American concert hall, brought together as they were by talent, politics, and the public's genuine hunger for musical culture.

Equally important of course was the music performed at these summer concerts. Stadium audiences were treated to arguably an even more eclectic diet than were winter concertgoers. Most concerts began with a symphony or symphonic poem in the first half followed by concertos and/or shorter orchestral works in the second half. The two parts were often bridged by end-of-the-Intermission announcements of future concerts given by inimitable Stadium Chairperson Minnie Guggenheimer. However, many programs also included light fare from operetta, Broadway, and Tin Pan Alley, some notable early attempts to combine jazz with the symphony orchestra, and some attempts to bring about greater ethnic diversity in the American concert music scene. In particular, serious music by African Americans, such as William Grant Still, H. T. Burleigh, Ulysses Kay, and Duke Ellington, figured on the concerts along with Negro spirituals and folk musics of all kinds. Although some may question the extent to which multiculturalism has contributed to the classical music canon, no study of an American music institution is complete without some discussion of the impact of this movement upon it. As the story of Lewisohn Stadium proves, multiculturalism existed for many years before the term was coined.

Then there were the works by European and Euro-American composers which, when put together, reveal the development of the canon throughout the century. One observes the continued popularity of the long-established major composers, the developing rise of later-acknowledged masters, the gradual fading of the temporarily important, and numerous premieres by composers major and minor. In short, the music at Lewisohn Stadium constituted a rich and varied attempt to combine the best of the European classical music establishment with the search for an American classical voice. The latter of course was molded by the social and political attitudes of the time, one being the characteristically American view that a "search" was needed in the first place.

In this book, I discuss the concerts that made up the bulk of the events put on at Lewisohn Stadium from 1918 to 1964. I also briefly discuss the three years leading up to the Stadium Concerts as well as the two final seasons, 1965 and 1966, the summers of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra at the Stadium. The book explores the participants involved and how they all came to be represented on those concerts. As little has been written about the Lewisohn

Stadium Concerts, this book seeks to fill a void in scholarship on New York's music history. In particular, I answer several questions:

1. To what extent was the music performed at the Stadium representative of the canon as it developed over time?
2. What can be learned from the myriad attempts made during the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts at forming a distinctly American, as opposed to a European or Euro-American, musical identity?

I also hope that this book will be a starting point for future research about modern summer concert series involving other major American orchestras about which, in most cases, little has been written. Such festivals include Los Angeles's Hollywood Bowl concerts (which began in 1922 and feature the Los Angeles Philharmonic), the Philadelphia Orchestra's Robin Hood Dell concerts (1930), the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Ravinia concerts (1936) and the Tanglewood concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1937), among others. Of these festivals, Tanglewood has inspired the most scholarship up to this point, with Herbert Kupferberg's 1976 history, *Tanglewood* and Andrew L. Pincus's two collections of Tanglewood stories, *Scenes from Tanglewood* (1989) and *Tanglewood: The Clash Between Tradition and Change* (1998) leading the way. The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts preceded all of these other series and thus served as a model for them all. However, for reasons which will be discussed later, it did not survive to the present day as have the others.⁵

To achieve an overview of the concerts, I created a master list; it was immediately possible to observe trends in programming as well as the musical figures involved. For example, one observes the large number of Wagner compositions given during the Stadium Concerts' first twenty-five seasons and the significant decline in hearings of his music during the Stadium's last two decades. One also observes the varying number of recent American compositions heard at the Stadium throughout its run. Contemporary American composers were heard with reasonable frequency during the twenties and thirties, but less often from the mid-forties on as fewer concerts probably meant less opportunity for experimentation. The rise in interest in American music in the twenties and thirties may also have been due to anti-German sentiment which, as will be seen, faded from the mid-thirties on.

The next step was to select the most important concerts from the overall list. My criteria for the selected concerts included those whose repertoire

⁵ The Philadelphia Orchestra currently performs at Philadelphia's Mann Center for the Performing Arts, located not far from the Robin Hood Dell, and in Saratoga, New York during the summer months.

represented in particular twentieth-century music, American music, and light music. Also chosen were concerts involving notable conductors, several of them in their New York debuts. Then, of course, there were the soloists, some of whom also made their major New York concert debuts at the Stadium. After discerning the most significant concerts, reviews from the leading newspapers were consulted. As mentioned in the Acknowledgements, the Stadium Committee created scrapbooks consisting of reviews of and articles about the Stadium Concerts from 1924 to 1964. The Committee was unbiased in its choice of articles, including in these scrapbooks some highly negative writings about the festival and its performers as well as the expected puff pieces. There were a sufficient number of articles in these scrapbooks for an historian to put together a coherent picture of Lewisohn Stadium, to assess some of the effects of the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts on twentieth century concert life as a whole, and to discern their possible musical legacy.

For the most part, I am concerned with the concerts given from 1918 to 1964 rather than with non-musical Stadium issues (such as what happened behind the scenes in terms of the running of the festival, among other things). After all, it is the story of the concerts that up until now has yet to be told. For more information on the history of Lewisohn Stadium itself as well as social context I refer the reader to the only two other writings on the Stadium: *Mother Is Minnie* by Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer and Alix Williamson, and M. Jean Tepsic's "Bread and tickets: An historical study of the dance events at Lewisohn Stadium, 1925-1945." The former is an entertaining biography of Minnie Guggenheimer by her daughter and the Stadium Concerts' publicist. The latter is a 1994 Ph.D. dissertation by Dr. Tepsic that deals with dance events at the Stadium. Both tell the stories of the construction of the Stadium, the pre-New York Philharmonic events, and the behind-the-scenes intrigues among other Stadium-related areas of interest.⁶ Marie Volpe's *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds* is a biography of the first Stadium conductor, Arnold Volpe, and discusses the formation and first two seasons of the Stadium Concerts. Howard Shanet's *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra* offers some pertinent information as well.

The story of the concerts at Lewisohn Stadium needs to be told for several reasons. First, it constitutes a significant portion of the history of one of the world's oldest symphony orchestras. As the repertoire sometimes varied between the winter season and the summer season, it is important to assess why certain

⁶ Both works discuss in some detail the financial issues pertaining to the Stadium concerts, which were funded largely through individual solicitations undertaken by Mrs. Guggenheimer herself. Donors ran the gamut from major businessmen to political figures to everyday New Yorkers cornered by Guggenheimer herself at parties and in the city streets. All financial and organizational records pertaining to the concerts appear to be lost, as are the minutes of the Stadium Committee meetings.

works were appropriate for the winter season while some were not. The Stadium Concerts featured mostly “highbrow” fare, but often (particularly in their last two decades) crossed into other genres. Second, the story of Lewisohn Stadium is a reminder of a different era in the history of the country. It was an era when people from all walks of life sought to better themselves culturally in ways that one rarely sees today. In the early years of the Stadium Concerts, New Yorkers were actively interested in the programs and the talent that were on display every summer at the City College campus. During the Concerts’ first two decades, they worked in tandem with the performers and the Stadium Committee in searching for a great contemporary American composer with a passion similar to that of sports fans. It can and will be argued that the search was a successful one. In addition, as the Stadium Concerts tickets were low-priced, a greater glimpse into the subcultures of twentieth century New York City political as well as social can be gleaned at the Stadium than perhaps at Carnegie Hall. But more than anything else, New York was and remains America’s leading cultural center, for better or for worse. As such, the landscape of New York music history scholarship is not complete without a book about a cultural landmark which was of tremendous importance to its inhabitants for almost five decades.

Lewisohn Stadium was home to great music and welcome to all, regardless of race, creed or color. The Stadium Concerts maintained a mostly politically neutral tone, with both sides occasionally represented as should be the case. Given that the years of the festival included wars and a depression, and that tensions as always were high, respite was needed and provided. “Stadium-goers” with whom the author has talked smile with warmth at the mere mention of the Stadium Concerts. Hence, there is a need for an examination of these concerts to bring them back from the relative obscurity into which they have fallen.

Chapter 1

Prelude

The night of 9 August 1937 was a special night in New York City history. Unfortunately, it was also a sad one.

That evening, thousands of New Yorkers from all walks of life went to “the Stadium,” as many were wont to do during the summer months. Since 1918, the phrase, “Meet me at the Stadium,” had been heard throughout the town.¹ The stadium in question was, in this case, neither Yankee Stadium nor Ebbets Field nor the Polo Grounds, but a large Roman coliseum located on the City College campus in uptown Manhattan. Built to provide an outdoor venue for the College’s various teams during the school year, from June to August, New Yorkers flocked to Lewisohn Stadium to lose themselves in beautiful music performed in most cases by the New York Philharmonic, America’s oldest orchestra in continuous existence. The evening of 9 August 1937 was in many respects no exception.

The music performed at Lewisohn Stadium, mostly by the Philharmonic from the summer of 1922 on, pleased most New Yorkers so much that the Stadium Concerts, as they were known, had already survived and even thrived during the Great Depression. Since radio and recordings were still in their infancies, these concerts were practically the only venue available for many New Yorkers to hear great classical orchestral music during the summer. Donations by citizens, poor, middle class and wealthy, ensured that the concerts could continue with inexpensive cost for admission. Leading the cause for great summer music was the Stadium Committee, which worked tirelessly and without compensation to keep the festival afloat. In addition, while the orchestra members received full wages for their work, most conductors and soloists performed for a small fee, themselves highly committed to this experiment in “Music for the People.” The concern of nearly everyone at Lewisohn Stadium: that great orchestral music be heard then and for generations to come. And so the Stadium Concerts continued, entertaining sometimes tens of thousands a night while providing a model for other summer orchestra festivals in a number of other American cities. The Stadium Concerts were the first such festival in this country. By 9 August 1937, they were an essential part of New York City life.

¹Marie Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1950), 149.

At Lewisohn Stadium, Democrats and Republicans were able to put aside their differences and take in Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky while forgetting, perhaps for a couple of hours, the problems of the world. In the early twenties, most of the concerts were led by Dutch conductor, Willem van Hoogstraten, a dynamic leader who had a considerable following. Towards the end of the Roaring Twenties, however, other fine conductors had signed on, all of them willing to make the trip to Uptown Manhattan in hopes of making a name for themselves in what was and arguably still is the classical music capital of America.

By 1937, some changes in programming had been made in order to provide greater musical diversity. For example, after more than a decade of largely symphonic programs, complete operas were performed in the thirties. But perhaps the most important move the Stadium Concerts made from the standpoint of programming during the first two decades of their existence was to Americanize the summer music festival with music composed by American composers. Indeed, the twenties and the thirties were the best decade for American composers and the Stadium Concerts. As such, many of the concerts featured at least one new American composition. In the summer of 1923, a talent competition was held. Several premieres brought to the concerts much publicity, so eager many of the participants were in finding great American compositional talent. In fact, there may never have been a time in American musical history when the nation's orchestras worked harder to find a great American composer than the twenties. This was particularly the case at Lewisohn Stadium.

By the summer of 1937, many music lovers in and out of New York City believed that they had found a great American composer. It can also be argued that no other American institution nurtured him and his music to the extent that the Stadium Concerts did. The fact that his music still remains popular to this day proves that the Stadium Committee, Stadium conductors, and Stadium audiences were wise in their choice of American composer. The 9 August 1937 concert was devoted to his music.

That the composer was a "local boy made good" may have added to his appeal in Uptown Manhattan. Initially a "song-plugger" by trade, this talented young man made his considerable fame and fortune by writing for Broadway and for Hollywood, yet he harbored serious music aspirations. In addition to many still beloved popular songs, he wrote concert pieces for orchestra, some of which featured solo piano, as well as an opera that remains to this day one of the few American works in the operatic canon. His music combined a fidelity to European music formal tradition with melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic textures that could only have been created by an early-twentieth century American. At the same time, his music was not too connected to its era that it has proved

transient. The continued performance of his music long after the final Stadium concert of 1966 proves its enduring appeal.

In the late twenties, Stadium-goers flocked to Lewisohn Stadium whenever at least one piece by this composer was performed. They were particularly thrilled when the young man performed at the piano or even picked up the baton himself. On most of these occasions, the composer may have felt overwhelmed by the huge size of the audiences, which were estimated at tens of thousands. His popularity was so great that in the early to mid-thirties, several concerts devoted exclusively to his music were held. Never before the thirties had the Stadium Concerts presented a concert devoted to only one living American composer and, indeed, it would do so for very few other living composers during its run.

Not everyone at City College was convinced. The critics, who supposedly might have known better, saw little in this wunderkind's music to praise. They dismissed the large audiences and the enthusiasm of many of the onstage participants and predicted the fading of interest in the young man, something which, as of the present, has yet to happen. They did not offer anyone else as a better choice for Stadium acclaim. But the local boy made good? Nothing to see here. Move along. Still, the concerts featuring his music continued. Depending on the weather, so did the large audiences. Stadium-goers, not the so-called experts, knew what they had. They eagerly awaited more to come from him, a man still in his late thirties.

And then, as American novelist John O'Hara put it succinctly, "George Gershwin died on July 11, 1937, but I don't have to believe it if I don't want to."²

Unfortunately, O'Hara and many music lovers in and out of the Stadium had no choice but to believe it. Amazingly enough, George Gershwin, the composer of such still-beloved works as *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris*, and *Porgy and Bess*, was dead at the age of only thirty-eight, the victim of a brain tumor. It is difficult to imagine the shock that so many felt at the time. Never before had America had a classical composer who not only pleased concertgoers but did so with a musical voice that spoke to them as one of their own. It may be too presumptuous to call Gershwin, or any American, the Great American composer. But it is hard to think of too many American composers, serious or popular, whose music has captivated audiences to the extent that his has. It is staggering to think of what he would have accomplished had he lived even five years longer than he did. George Gershwin. Dead at thirty-eight. Unthinkable. Tragic.

² Edward Jablonski, *Gershwin: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), ix.

Only several of Gershwin's classical pieces were premiered at Lewisohn Stadium. But the festival's introduction of all-Gershwin concerts in the early thirties, which other festivals later took on, was a big factor in the popularity of his compositions. It was only fitting, then, that a memorial concert be held at Lewisohn Stadium. Soon after Gershwin's death, the Stadium Committee joined forces with several of New York's finest musicians, classical as well as popular, to organize a tribute to New York's fallen musical hero. On 9 August 1937, another all-Gershwin night at the Stadium was held. And one would be held at least once every summer at City College's stadium from that year until the final season of 1966, so proud the Stadium Concerts were of its connection to Gershwin.

At one point during the evening's proceedings, the Stadium Committee's chairperson, Mrs. Charles S. Guggenheimer—"Minnie," as she would come to be known by millions of New Yorkers —asked the large audience of New Yorkers from all walks of life to join with her in a moment of silence. From the wealthy to the lower class to everyone in between, they bowed their heads.

Chapter 2

The Beginnings: the Birth of Lewisohn Stadium

In 1907, Dr. John H. Finley, president of the City College of New York, felt the need for a suitable athletic facility at the new campus of his school. With that goal in mind, he wrote to New York City mayor George B. McClellan, who agreed to give to the college land located between 136th Street and 138th Street, with Convent Avenue to the east, and Amsterdam Avenue to the west.¹ To fund the Stadium, Finley's friend Richard Watson Gilder, the editor of *Century Magazine*, referred Finley to investment banker, copper mining magnet, and millionaire, Adolph Lewisohn. He also recommended the architect, Arnold W. Brunner. Eventually, both men agreed to support the project.

The construction took several years. The convocation at which the plans were revealed was held on 16 November 1912. Nearly a year later, on 7 November 1913, the groundbreaking ceremony was held and on 15 June of the next year the cornerstone was laid. The expected date for completion was November 1914, but World War I broke out in August, somewhat delaying the construction and increasing the cost of the Stadium, which was ultimately reported to cost somewhere between \$265,000 and \$405,000.²

The Stadium itself was accessible via entrances located at either 136th or 138th street. It was modeled very much like a Greco-Roman coliseum, with sixty-four Doric columns each fifteen feet high surrounded by two pavilions on the north and south ends of the Stadium arc. Audience members sat on concrete steps of which there were nineteen tiers split into sixteen sections.³ One of the many lingering memories New Yorkers of a certain age (some of them friends and relatives of the present writer) have of Lewisohn Stadium were those rocky seats and the efforts they made to make them more comfortable. Many brought straw mats with them, often showing their enthusiasm for performances by tossing them in the air.⁴

Originally, the Stadium which was later named after Lewisohn was intended to be an all-purpose athletic facility. However, on the date of the

¹ M. Jean Tepsic, "Bread and tickets: An historical study of the dance events at Lewisohn Stadium, 1925-1945" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1994), 66.

² *Ibid.*, 67-69.

³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴ Howard Pollack, *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 125.



Figure 2: Full house at the Stadium.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-105-13-004).

dedication, 29 May 1915, somewhat anticipating the Stadium's eventual legacy of bringing culture to the masses, Euripides's *The Trojan Women* was performed in a production directed by British director, Granville Barker. For this production, a stage was built on the grass field on which City College sporting events and the Stadium Concerts later took place. Critics of the time complained about street noises interrupting the performance, among other things. This would continue to be a problem with the Stadium Concerts. However, unlike the Stadium Concerts, the performance of *The Trojan Women* was held in the afternoon rather than in the evening and, to make matters worse, on a Saturday. It would have been too much to have expected quiet in the neighborhood on that time and day.⁵ Recognizing the problems inherent with performing shows in the daytime, Lewisohn, in October of 1915, donated money that was used for lighting in the Stadium. This enabled future productions to be performed at night when the street noises would probably be diminished.⁶ More innovations were soon to follow, including all-important microphones. There were no daytime concerts at the Stadium throughout the festival's long history.

During the next few years, Lewisohn Stadium was used for a few noteworthy productions. Open air opera nights, patriotic concerts, and a 1916 production of Percy MacKaye's *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* (in honor of William

⁵ Tepsic, "Bread and tickets," 69-70.

⁶ Ibid., 72-73.

Shakespeare's three-hundredth birthday); all included ensembles consisting of musicians from the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Symphony and the New York Philharmonic Orchestras. *Caliban* was directed by Granville Barker and featured a dance interlude by Isadora Duncan.⁷ Music described as reminiscent of Debussy and Scriabin was composed by Arthur Farwell, director of the New York Music School Settlement.⁸ Unfortunately, only the choral numbers of his incidental music survives in print; the full score has disappeared. For these performances, wooden seats were added on the Stadium's grass. Later, the *New York Times* reported damage to the grounds and to the Stadium itself as a result of all of the people on the premises, which almost led to lawsuits.⁹ Eventually, repairs were made. However, similar problems with the structure and the grass cropped up from time to time throughout the Stadium's history.¹⁰ The eventual and perhaps predictable decline of the Stadium itself was but one of the factors that led to its razing in 1973.

These summer happenings aside, Lewisohn Stadium was used mostly as a sports venue during its first three years of its existence. Its large size and stately appearance made it a much sought after venue for large city events. Initially, Lewisohn himself had no strong interests in cultural matters, even with the handful of musical and theatrical productions that graced his stadium during this time. No one then could have predicted that Lewisohn Stadium's greatest legacy would be a musical one. The story of how this musical legacy came about is just as intriguing and madcap as any that would occur during the forty-nine summers that followed.

The Birth of the Stadium Concerts

A mud ball thrown into a tuba. The several books that discuss the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts state that that prank was the main motivation behind the creation of the festival. In 1917, Louis Fehr, the publicity man for the New York City Park Department, attended a park band concert and was appalled when a youth tossed a mud ball into one of the band's tubas. He then determined that not only was live music a necessity, but so was a venue in which the musicians would be safe from such interruptions.¹¹ He approached the conductor and

⁷ Ibid., 73-75.

⁸ John Graziano, "Community Theater, *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, and Arthur Farwell," in *Vistas of American Music: Essays and Compositions in Honor of William K. Kearns*, ed. Susan L. Porter and John Graziano (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1999), 293-308.

⁹ *The New York Times*, "\$6,000 Damage Done By Masque Crowds," 4 August 1916.

¹⁰ Tepsic, "Bread and Tickets," 76-77.

¹¹ Ibid., 80.

music educator, Arnold Volpe, with the idea of organizing and leading concerts at such a venue. According to Marie Volpe, her husband led six band concerts at the Stadium as requested by Fehr, and upon surveying the scene concluded that orchestral concerts could be given there. The Volpes also determined that prices of admission should be kept to a minimum to allow music lovers from all walks of life the opportunity to attend these concerts. As the first announcement stated:

The plan is to give high-class, open-air concerts at the City College Stadium nightly for ten weeks at popular prices – 10, 25 and 50 cents.

A fundamental feature of the plan is free admission to soldiers and sailors in uniform.

In these times of stress it is of the greatest importance to provide healthy amusements for the masses. The value of music in stimulating patriotism is generally recognized.¹²

The season's length was soon reduced to seven weeks, during which time fifty concerts were given, with no music by German composers, in response to the war being fought abroad.¹³

It is worth mentioning that American anti-German sentiment was high during the early years of the Stadium Concerts, resulting in such situations as Frederick Stock's self-enforced exile from his job as Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which began in 1918 and ended the following season.¹⁴ In Boston, Boston Symphony Orchestra music director Karl Muck was arrested without formal charges on 25 March 1918, submitted his resignation five days later, was briefly imprisoned, then fled America altogether. All of this was despite the fact that he was actually a Swiss citizen; his German background was enough to rile the Boston public of the time.¹⁵ As will be seen, American orchestras, in or out of stadiums, went to great lengths to support American composers during the decade that followed. Anti-German sentiment may have been as much a factor as any other.

¹² Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 138.

¹³ Ibid., 139. Not even Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms were performed at the Stadium during this season.

¹⁴ Dena Epstein, "Frederick Stock and American Music," in *American Music* 10/1 (Spring, 1992), 24-26. Epstein writes that although Maestro Stock was loyal to America, he had not yet obtained citizenship assuming that it would eventually take effect automatically. His exile, during which he guest conducted other orchestras while his assistant, Eric DeLamarter, took his place, ended once his citizenship papers were filed. His return to the Chicago Symphony was greeted with warmth not just by the audience but by the orchestra as well. The musicians, most of whom were supporters of the war, greeted his return to the podium with a fanfare.

¹⁵ Barbara Tischler, "One Hundred Percent Americanism and Music in Boston during World War I," in *American Music* 4/2 (Summer, 1986) 168-71.

It was now only a matter of gathering the funds for just such a venture. A connection was needed, and the Volpes turned to their friend, Aaron Barron, a local critic, who, in turn, recommended to them Mr. Charles S. Guggenheimer and his wife, Minnie. The Guggenheimers had relationships to both Lewisohn and Volpe. They were the parents of one of Volpe's violin students¹⁶ and, perhaps more importantly, Mr. Guggenheimer's sister, Mrs. Philip Lewisohn, was Adolph Lewisohn's sister-in-law.¹⁷ Mr. Guggenheimer was also Mr. Lewisohn's legal counsel.¹⁸ But there were no guarantees that the Guggenheimers would be interested in the project. As it turned out, they were both extremely enthusiastic and supportive. They agreed to set up a meeting with Lewisohn for the purpose of persuading him to allow them to use the Stadium for classical music concerts and, of course, to lead the way in the funding of those concerts.

Lewisohn was unimpressed; the first meeting ended with his dismissal of the whole thing. A second meeting was arranged, where the pianist and conductor, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, spoke passionately about the need for America to have outdoor summer concerts similar to those in Europe. Lewisohn offered the tepid amount of \$500 in support of a venture that would cost at least \$10,000. The Volpes were disappointed but Mrs. Guggenheimer remained optimistic. Sure enough, Gabrilowitsch's successful American debut as conductor and pianist soon after the second meeting moved Lewisohn to raise his subscription to \$1,000.¹⁹ According to Mrs. Volpe, Lewisohn became so excited by the Stadium Concerts that he later took singing lessons.²⁰

Arnold Volpe, the First Stadium Conductor

The first principal conductor of the Stadium Concerts was born on 7 July 1869 in Kovno, Russia.²¹ Of Jewish birth, Arnold Volpe attended the Imperial Conservatory of St. Petersburg where he studied composition, ensemble music, and conducting while encountering many examples of anti-Semitism. For example, the young Volpe experienced extreme difficulty just being allowed to live in St. Petersburg, to the point where he had to live in the streets for six weeks while waiting for the Governor's permission to do so.²² Among his professors

¹⁶ Tepsic, "Bread and Tickets," 80.

¹⁷ Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 140.

¹⁸ Tepsic, "Bread and Tickets," 80.

¹⁹ Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 140-43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²² *Ibid.*, 25-28.

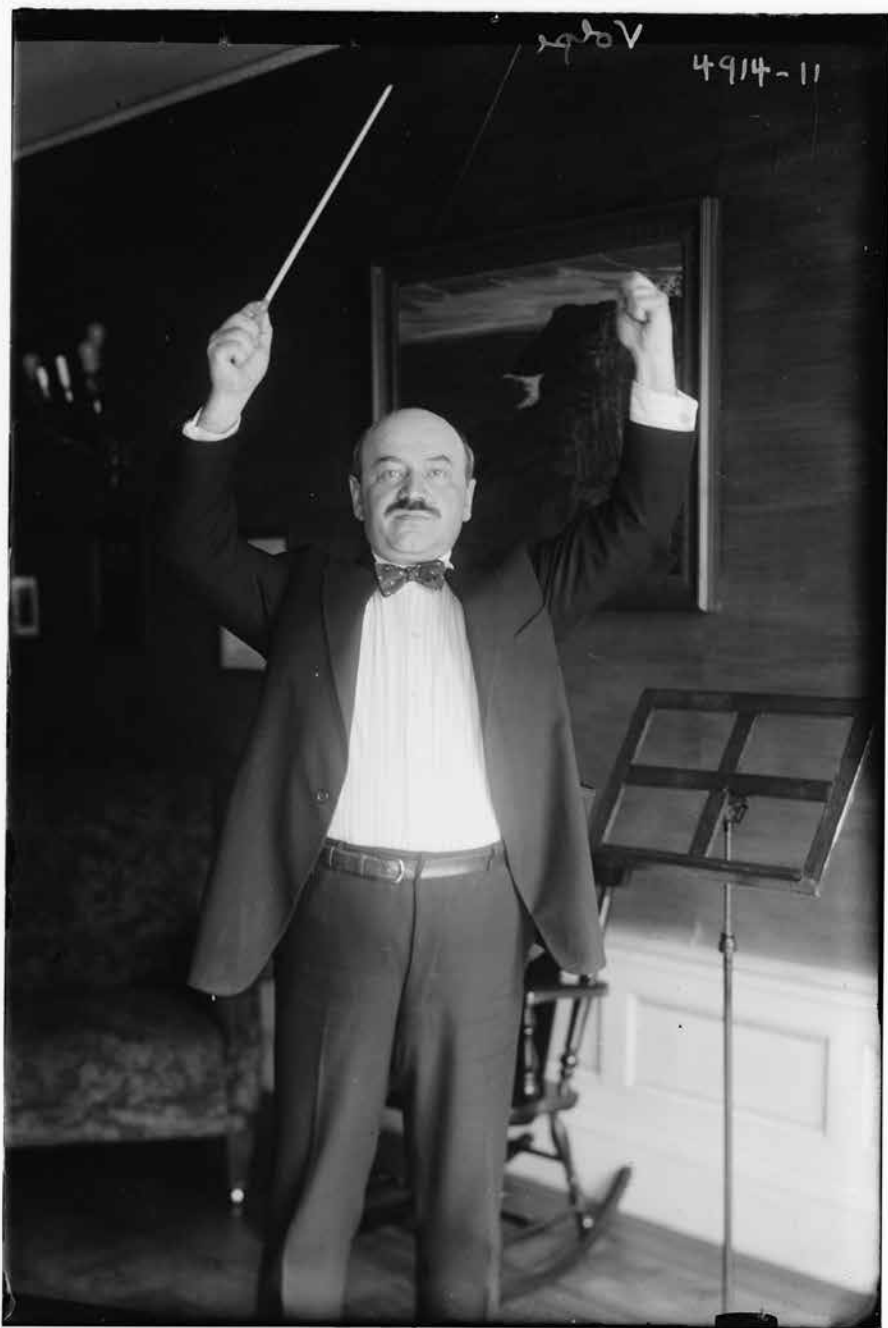


Figure 3: Arnold Volpe, the first principal conductor of the Stadium Concerts.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, George Grantham Bain Collection (ID: LC-B2- 4914-14). Gift of Marie Volpe. (PD-1923)

were Anton Rubinstein and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov; fellow classmate, pianist Ossip Gabrilowitsch, was his best friend. During his student years, Volpe met and received encouragement from Pyotr Tchaikovsky. He attended the premiere of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony, then served as one of the pallbearers at the great composer's funeral several days after the premiere. Throughout the rest of his life, Volpe considered himself a particularly dedicated Tchaikovsky interpreter.²³

Volpe made a brief sojourn to Johannesburg, South Africa in 1897 after his father, a difficult man, took the family there to prevent Arnold's only sister from marrying a man of whom he disapproved.²⁴ It was there that the young man found his calling: he was to be a builder and conductor of orchestras. His trip to Johannesburg resulted in the creation of the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra.²⁵ Volpe moved to America in 1899, expecting to only pay a brief visit. He remained in America for most of the rest of his life, doing much to bring culture to the American public as conductor, orchestra builder and educator. Unfortunately, he did little to make a name for himself in Europe which, along with other factors, may have impeded his growth into major status as a conductor. The early twentieth century cultural world, in America as well as in Europe, was slow to accept American musicians, even those who, like Volpe, were not born in America.

Volpe began his American career in New York City, playing the violin in various orchestras—among them the New York Symphony led by Walter Damrosch—while supplementing his career teaching the violin. Success in the latter role resulted in Volpe creating what his wife, Marie, claimed was New York's first training orchestra ever, the Young Men's Symphony Orchestra of New York (YMSO). Volpe led the orchestra from 1902 to 1919.²⁶ In 1905, Volpe founded the Volpe Symphony Orchestra, another training orchestra for recent graduates of YMSO. As music director of the Volpe Symphony Orchestra, Volpe (who conducted without accepting a salary) dedicated himself to the cause of American music, including at least one American composition on every program. Marie Volpe's biography of her husband lists the American works performed by the Volpe Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. They include Edward MacDowell's *Hamlet and Ophelia*, op. 22; two movements from Arthur Foote's Suite in D minor, op. 36; and future Stadium conductor Henry Hadley's overture, *In Bohemia*, op. 28, among others.²⁷ The Volpe Symphony

²³ Ibid., 38-41.

²⁴ Ibid., 48.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 62-65.

²⁷ Ibid., 90-91.

Orchestra ceased operations with the advent of World War I. Further Volpe creations included the Orchestra of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (1909-1918)²⁸ and the Volpe Institute of Music (1916-1920).²⁹

But the project that was perhaps the most crucial to Volpe's early career was the Central Park concerts, which ran from 1910 to 1913.³⁰ It was with these concerts that Volpe proved, with some success, that classical orchestral music as opposed to more popular fare could find a large audience. Indeed, these concerts showed that the symphony orchestra was just as valid for summer entertainment as was the park band. As Mrs. Volpe explained:

Arnold was always at odds with those in power who held that the public was not interested in masterpieces. He thought the public—and he didn't divide the public up into segments or strata of lowbrows, mediumbrows and highbrows—was able to appreciate and love great music.³¹

Summer classical music concerts had existed in America before, at least to some extent. One example was the Theodore Thomas Orchestra concerts of the previous century. These concerts featured mostly light music. And of course, New York City was very much enriched by classical music at this point in history during the winter months, with several professional orchestras including America's oldest orchestra, the Philharmonic. Among the conductors who left Europe to lead the Philharmonic and the Met were such masters of the baton as Gustav Mahler and Arturo Toscanini. But the summer orchestra concert devoted largely to winter repertoire had yet to take hold as of the World War I era, according to Marie Volpe:

One must stretch the imagination considerably to accept as credible my descriptions of those days. But remember, radio was still unknown, and the great nationwide offering of good music in huge outdoor concerts, in the further development of which Arnold was to play such a vital part, had not even begun. This was the beginning – these orchestral concerts in Central Park, in 1910.³²

The newspapers of the day gave little to no coverage of these Central Park concerts; Mrs. Volpe's book is all we have about them. One rare press example is a 1910 *New-York Tribune* article promoting a future concert that

²⁸ Ibid., 105.

²⁹ Ibid., 119.

³⁰ Ibid., 106. Marie Volpe does not state where her husband found the musicians or if they were professionals who were former students in Volpe's various training orchestras. She does say that the musicians were paid \$7 a performance while Volpe was paid \$25 for a concert and a rehearsal.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

was to feature American composers. No composer is mentioned in the article and the date of the concert was not given.³³ Another article, from the *New York Sun* in 1912 discussed not only the acoustic problems which beset these concerts but also the rise in popularity of outdoor orchestra concerts and the audience's preference for orchestras over brass bands. The reporter writes, "Park Commissioner [Charles Bunstein] Stover pressed the opinion some time ago that the public preferred an orchestra to a brass band at these open air concerts and he considered it best to have orchestral music at all of the Central Park concerts this summer."³⁴ He also mentioned that

A breeze came out of the west and while it was grateful to those of the crowd obliged to sit in the sun, it carried most of the music to the fortunate ones that were sitting in comfort in the wistaria arbor on the terrace to the east. When Franz Kaltenborn, leader of the orchestra, played Borowski's "Adoration" probably not more than 2,000 persons heard the music.³⁵

Concerts were given every Sunday through 29 September 1912. During the 1913 season, five daily concerts a week were held, beginning on 30 June.³⁶ Critics did not review these concerts as they would the Stadium Concerts from later on. If we are to trust Mrs. Volpe (the above information would seem to support her), the concerts were a success, attracting audiences of 10,000 to 30,000.³⁷ As will be seen, the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts made similar claims regarding audience attendance figures, claims that cannot truly be proven one way or the other. It does appear, though, that the concerts, which ended in 1913 due to what Mrs. Volpe referred to as "a political change," were a great success with the New York public.³⁸ They were also a key precursor to the Stadium Concerts, as well as to all of the summer orchestra music festivals throughout America.

One humorous note (literally) took place when a trumpeter, charged with the offstage trumpet solos in Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture No. 3, almost got into an altercation with a policeman who did not know that the solos were part of the piece.³⁹ This was another harbinger of things to come. Not only were summer orchestra concerts a necessity, but so was a place to perform these concerts—a place where an orchestra could perform in safety without

³³ *New-York Tribune*, "TO PLEASE NATIONAL TASTE: Music of Many Races to be Played at Park Concerts," 23 July 1910.

³⁴ *The New York Sun*, "Thousands Couldn't Hear Music in Park," 3 June 1912.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 107.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 108-09.

risk of interruption, either by audience members, however well-meaning some audience members might have been, or by mud balls.

The First Four Seasons

At 8:30 in the evening of 23 June 1918, Maestro Volpe gave the downbeat and Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance*, performed by musicians hired from the various New York orchestras—identified on the program as “Stadium Symphony Orchestra”—was heard by thousands of New Yorkers.⁴⁰ Thus began the first of the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts, known at the time as the “City College Open-Air Concerts.” Amidst the winds of war, the behind-the-scene struggles to put the Stadium Concerts together, and the deficit that the committee knew would always exist, New Yorkers embraced the musical adventure. Many of them were eager for culture, particularly with a low ticket prices. The *New York Herald Tribune* even featured an article about the concert on its front page. Their critic proclaimed that “By means of a specially designed sounding board the acoustics were all that could be desired, those in seats furthest away hearing even better than those in front.”⁴¹ The concert also featured the Metropolitan Opera Chorus and, from the Chicago Opera Company, American soprano Anna Fitziu.

Musical America reviewed these early Stadium Concerts most often; many of the other papers usually announced the Concerts rather than critiqued them. *Musical America's* critic, however, was quite enthusiastic about the new festival and its principal conductor:

There was no surprise for those who know Mr. Volpe's many excellent achievements, when he conducted the Volpe Symphony concerts in New York over a period of years, to note again his skill as an orchestral conductor; his thorough knowledge of his scores and his firm control of his men were all again evident and he was showered with applause and given many recalls. He deserved them all.⁴²

The critic also praised Volpe for his work in dealing with the acoustics. He stated that the conductor “showed his understanding of the situation by adding the ‘cellos to the final chord of the ‘New World’ Largo, and by having sextets of violins, violas and ‘cellos do the passages for solo strings in this movement, as well as six ‘cellos on the opening ‘cello passage in the Rossini overture.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., 144.

⁴¹ *New York Herald Tribune*, “5,000 Attend First Concert In Open Air At City College,” 24 June 1918.

⁴² *Musical America*, “Stadium Symphony Series Inaugurated,” 29 June 1918.

⁴³ Ibid.

The critic did have his quibbles, though. While praising Fitzziu's singing, he found fault with the choristers from the Met who sang at the performance. In addition, Volpe's own creation, *American Reveille*, a collection of patriotic hymns written for the concert, did not please the critic as much as some of the other pieces on the program: "There are some admirable moments in this fantasy that do Mr. Volpe great credit, but as it stands it is much too long. If it can be cut down to half the time it now occupies it will be a very useful number at these concerts. But we hope it will be rehearsed before the next performance."⁴⁴

The latter comment about the lack of rehearsal for Volpe's *American Reveille* foreshadowed the inevitable growing pains for Volpe and his men during these first two seasons. There were raves, there were pans and, of course, there were mixed reviews. *Musical America* praised a 2 July 1918 performance of Franck's Symphony in D, a work it called, "long one of Mr. Volpe's battle horses. It was spiritedly played, but such music is not for the open air."⁴⁵ As time went on, improvements in the Stadium acoustics would enable Franck's symphony to be a mainstay. All went well the next day in a "pops" concert featuring such fare as Gounod's March from the *Queen of Sheba*, Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. The critic wrote, "In these works, Mr. Volpe achieved admirable results, his reading of the *1812 Overture* being particularly thrilling."⁴⁶ At an 18 July 1918 concert, Volpe and his musicians were taken to task for allowing the tempo to drag in several works. On this occasion, this tendency "detracted even from Mabel Riegelman's well-phrased, pure-toned delivery of the 'Jewel Song' from *Faust*, and made the Intermezzo and Barcarolle from *The Tales of Hoffman* well-nigh unbearable."⁴⁷ Finally, the 31 July 1918 concert which, due to bad weather, had to be moved to City College's Great Hall, led to this response:

Of the Ballet Suite from Delibes' *Coppelia*, which concluded the first part, Mr. Volpe gave a musically satisfactory, if none too grateful reading. After the playing of the French, Italian and Brabantian national anthems, the Overture to Smetana's *Bartered Bride* opened the second part of the program. Here also the orchestra displayed less finesse than in the subsequent Intermezzo and Barcarolle from *The Tales of Hoffman*.⁴⁸

American compositions were gradually introduced into the proceedings; by 15 July, a few pieces had been performed. MacDowell's *Indian Suite* was one such work. *Musical America* noted that the "Love Song" from the Suite "was especially

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Musical America*, "Hear Noted Artists in Stadium Series," 6 July 1918.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Musical America*, "Week at Stadium Rich in Interest," 10 August 1918.

well-received.”⁴⁹ James P. Dunn’s *Lovesight* for soprano and orchestra was heard on 2 August 1918. The following review presages the reception given to most contemporary works that were to be played at the Stadium during the several decades that followed. Critics were often quick to dismiss, yet were sparing in their praise. Often, American composers were accused of rewriting prominent Europeans of the present and not too distant past. As the *Musical America* opined:

A new American score was introduced at this concert in the shape of James P. Dunn’s *Lovesight*, an extended number of the order known as “poem,” for soprano and orchestra. The solo part was sung admirably by Irene McCabe. Mr Dunn led the instrumental forces in his own composition. *Lovesight* seemed to the writer, on first hearing, to be singularly lacking in originality. In it Mr. Dunn displays intimacy with and admiration for the writings of Wagner and several of the Italian “verists.” *Tristan* is not merely hinted at, it is echoed. The scoring is sometimes skillful, sometimes woefully overlaid. Such spicy effects as muted trumpet and cymbal beaten with hard stick are flagrantly abused. The work is furthermore much longer than the quality of its thematic material warrants. Where is the American composer who dares or knows how to be modest in his technical means and to draw the double bar-line when he has had his say?⁵⁰

One senses from the reviews that lack of rehearsal time, hot weather, and simply the wear and tear from so many concerts in this new format may have been factors in these on-days and off-days. However, New Yorkers were much intrigued by this summer experiment in “Music for the People.” The 1918 season alone was estimated to have attracted 100,000 listeners.⁵¹ After the arguably successful first season, the slogan “Meet Me at the Stadium” was spoken by many New York residents. And as far as the deficit was concerned, the situation was satisfactory even if there was no profit. After adding up the disbursements and receipts, the deficit for the first season came out to \$9,288.01. Since the committee had raised \$10,000 for the guarantee fund, the deficit was covered and even the critics in and out of the press who predicted failure had to concede success.⁵²

In her book, Marie Volpe works hard to be thorough in describing the early years of the Stadium Concerts. She dispels later commentators’ statements that the Concerts did not attract major soloists by listing many names that have not survived history but were impressive in their time. Such musical figures included soprano Florence Macbeth, pianist Harold Bauer, soprano and wife of Henry Hadley, Inez Barbour, and baritone Percy Hemus, to list but four of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Musical America*, “Eight Weeks of Fine Concerts in Prospect for New York,” 28 June 1919.

⁵² Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 147.

them.⁵³ It is also worth mentioning that Enrico Caruso was in the audience for the first concert and that Mrs. Charles Dana Gibson was among the members of the executive committee. Another fact that Mrs. Volpe reveals is that the concerts were not as reliant on pops repertoire as later reporters stated, with many complete symphonies performed. In fact, concerts Mondays through Thursdays were known as “Symphony Nights.”⁵⁴ However, anti-German sentiment resulted in the Concerts’ avoidance of German music in 1918. This resulted in, among other things a large number of American composers having their works performed at the Stadium as the two first summers progressed. Noteworthy among these Americans were Edward MacDowell, represented by his earlier-mentioned *Indian Suite*, and the *Poem Erotique* and *Scotch Poem*, and composer-conductor Henry Hadley, with many works that included *Rhapsody—The Culprit Fay* and several symphonies.⁵⁵ In 1919, with the war over, German music was once again performed.

Although few reviews were written about these early Stadium Concerts in publications other than *Musical America*, a few newspapers did indicate that they were a considerable success with the New York public. As the *New York Tribune* reported, “The success of the Stadium symphony concerts has so far exceeded expectations that Music League of the People’s Institute of New-York and other sponsors of these concerts have added another week to the series two performances ending the season of Labor Day.” The concerts mentioned in this article list Henry Hadley and Victor Herbert among the guest conductors engaged for this extra week, the latter for a popular concert. Soprano Rosa Ponselle, the eminent American soprano who had performed at the Stadium earlier that season, was engaged for this extra week as well.⁵⁶ Both conductors and Ponselle continued their ties with the Stadium Concerts into the following decade.

The 1920 season presented two major changes to the Stadium Concerts. Not only was the National Symphony Orchestra named the Stadium orchestra, but Los Angeles Philharmonic conductor, Walter Henry Rothwell, was named the Stadium conductor for what would turn out to be only one season. Why was Volpe not renewed? According to his widow, four years after the dismissal, she and her husband learned that the founder of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, William Andrew Clark, Jr., donated \$10,000 to the festival on the condition

⁵³ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 155.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 220.

⁵⁶ *New-York Tribune*, “Extra Week Added to Open Air Concerts at The Lewisohn Stadium,” 24 August 1919.

that Rothwell replace Volpe.⁵⁷ Volpe was devastated upon receiving news of his dismissal, which took place the day after a testimonial dinner held in his honor at the Hotel Astor on 6 October 1919.⁵⁸ Mrs. Volpe reported that her husband was suicidal during the days that followed, turning to religion to recover from the enormous disappointment.⁵⁹ The Stadium job was one he cherished, one he believed would lift him into the upper strata of the conducting world. Now, it had been taken away from him.

For whatever reason, Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer, in her 1960 biography of Minnie Guggenheimer, does not comment at all on this incident, which had led Mrs. Volpe to say in her 1950 book that the Lewisohn Stadium story “was not altogether as pretty a story as it looked to those who viewed it from the outside.”⁶⁰ At the time, most of the media was silent on the issue; some papers mentioned Rothwell’s appointment but did not report the reason for the change in Stadium conductor.⁶¹ If what Mrs. Volpe wrote is true, it may have been one of the darkest moments in the history of the Stadium Concerts. Despite her ample scholarship, a mistake in her work can be gleaned in that, after reporting that her husband turned down a one-week engagement in 1920, she does not mention the handful of Stadium performances that he did undertake during the several decades that followed.

Ms. Volpe’s portrait of her husband also suffers a little from hero worship, which may or may not have been justified. For example, a growing number of conductors were eager to preside over the Stadium orchestra during these first two seasons, some of whom were recommended to Lewisohn by “every friend, and friend-of-a-friend” who knew a conductor. Maestro Volpe told Lewisohn that not every conductor could take on the only two rehearsals a week that the budget permitted for the seven concerts a week. Whether or not this was the case, Mrs. Volpe reported that the musicians preferred her husband to most of the guest conductors, who they referred to as “pest conductors,” so proud they were of the “high standards” they and Volpe had set.⁶²

Volpe did play a large role in the development of music careers for young American musicians (among them, future Stadium guest conductors George King Raudenbush and Leon Barzin) and had enough pedigree to lead orchestras made up of the major New York professional instrumentalists. But with no recorded evidence of Volpe’s conducting, one can only wonder if there may

⁵⁷ Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 165-6.

⁵⁸ *The New York Times*, “Praise for Arnold Volpe,” 7 October 1919.

⁵⁹ Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 162.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁶¹ *New-York Tribune*, “Rothwell to Conduct Summer Concert by New Symphony,” 14 March 1920.

⁶² Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 156.

have been other reasons for his lack of growth in the American professional orchestral world than bias against musicians with little to no European experience.

Musical America offered several possible explanations not mentioned by Mrs. Volpe. According to their critic, Volpe was rumored to have objected to Lewisohn's hiring of Dirk Foch to guest conduct the Stadium orchestra on a 23 July 1919 concert. As the unnamed critic stated in his 5 June 1920 column, "Mephisto's Musings":

Mr. Volpe's is considerably concerned in the matter that he should be accused even of seeming discourtesy to a brother conductor. I understand that while he certainly felt that he should have been consulted in the matter, at the same time he left Mr. Foch all the necessary music, and at the first rehearsal personally introduced him to the orchestra and remained after the concert, with Mrs. Volpe, to congratulate him.

With regard to certain troubles with two of three members of the orchestra, these, I understand, were simply caused by the necessity to maintain discipline, and, indeed, anybody who knows Mr. Volpe would be among the last to accuse him of taking an autocratic attitude. Indeed, if he does err, it is a tendency to go to the other extreme, rather than have 'trouble.'⁶³

In the end, it is mostly a matter of conjecture as to why Lewisohn replaced Volpe with Rothwell. Volpe pleased many Stadium-goers yet may not have been the major conductor that the Stadium Committee craved as the festival continued over time.

The 23 July 1919 performance, which consisted of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, Nicolai's Overture to *Merry Wives of Windsor*, the Prelude to Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, and Chabrier's *España*, marked Foch's New York debut. *The New York Times* praised him, stating, "Far from the conventional Dutchman, he impressed his hearers as an emotional interpreter as well as trained leader of music."⁶⁴ On the other hand, *Musical America* took Foch to task for being too acrobatic on the podium, stating in its headline, "Dirk Foch [*sic*] Escorts Players Through Some Weird Gyration in the *Pathetic Symphony*."⁶⁵ Foch never conducted at the Stadium during the Philharmonic years of 1922 to 1964. Another Dutchman would, however; he too would be accused of being too flashy on the podium.

For his part, Rothwell did not inject himself into the controversy about Volpe's dismissal. A 19 June 1920 *Musical America* interview stated, "After an arduous season with the Los Angeles Symphony he entered visions of a long

⁶³ *Musical America*, "Mephisto's Musings," 5 June 1920.

⁶⁴ *The New York Times*, "Dirk Foch Makes Debut," 24 July 1919.

⁶⁵ *Musical America*, "Hollander Conducts Stadium Orchestra as a Guest," 2 August 1919.

summer vacation. Out of a clear sky came a telegram calling him to New York. He pondered briefly, then assented.”⁶⁶ In that same article, Rothwell offered his agenda for the third Stadium season in the following words:

I am not going to devote certain nights to certain types of music. . . . That is to say, I am not going to play on one evening a preponderance of compositions designed to appeal only to one order of taste. I do not intend to have exclusive symphonic nights or operatic nights, for instance. I shall not play potpourris from various operas. I object to these because they give an improperly devised succession of scenes, which must be carefully led up to and not be reached by the slipshod modulating of some ‘arranger.’ On the other hand, I do not propose, except in a few isolated cases, to play entire symphonies. A movement or two will be enough.⁶⁷

Rothwell received praise from the *New-York Tribune*’s critic after the 26 June opening concert of the 1920 season, which featured Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony*, Wagner’s “Love-Death” from *Tristan and Isolde*, and Chabrier’s *España*, among other works:

Mr. Rothwell did full justice to every number. He has the advantage of youth, a decisive beat, a temperament that responds to the requirements of emotional music. But he is also a well-schooled musician, a master of men. His wishes are made known with authority and gladly carried out by the players under his direction. . . . In many respects the present series of concerts may be said to be an improvement over last season.”⁶⁸

Worth mentioning is that the concert was attended by an estimated 10,000 audience members, proving that even after the dismissal of the first Stadium conductor, the Concerts were much prized by New Yorkers from all walks of life.⁶⁹

As promised, programs often consisted largely of short works and occasionally featured one complete symphony. It is a matter of conjecture whether the symphonies in question were performed with cuts. One such example of a 1920 program was the 19 August concert in which was played Dvorak’s *New World Symphony*, the “Waltz of the Flowers” from Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* and various arias from operas by Verdi, Puccini, and Ponchielli. The soloists were soprano Vera Curtis and baritone Hipólito Lázaro. Curtis was the first American-trained opera singer to sing at the Metropolitan Opera

⁶⁶ *Musical America*, “Rothwell Gives His Opinions on Programs for the Open-Air,” 19 June 1920.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *New-York Tribune*, “First Open Air Concert Given by Symphony,” 27 June 1920.

⁶⁹ *The New York Times*, “10,000 At Stadium Opening Concert,” 27 June 1920.

House.⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that in none of these six concerts were there American compositions.⁷¹

Initially, the positive reviews, mostly from *Musical America*, continued for Rothwell's conducting, if not necessarily for the National Symphony Orchestra. As the critic wrote on 10 July:

So far the outstanding element of the concerts has been the new disclosure of Walter Henry Rothwell's extraordinarily fine qualifications as a conductor. This is nothing new to those who heard him four years ago, but there are multitudes who did not. Naturally his skill has exerted its best effect indoors, where every phase of his musicianship, poetic temperament, authority and inclusiveness of technical method has tellingly stood forth. The orchestra is not yet in the pink of condition, but the facilities for preparation and rehearsal are limited at the Stadium and some of the orchestral material is not flawless.⁷²

In that same review was intriguing praise for Rothwell's handling of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony: "And it was interesting to note that . . . a Mahler disciple did it so beautifully, when Mahler did it so badly."⁷³ A 15 July performance of pieces by Johann Strauss elicited the following: "Surely there is no conductor in America today who play the Strauss waltzes with irresistible effect of Mr. Rothwell."⁷⁴ However, the orchestra did not escape the critic's dismissal in Wagner pieces performed on 11 July: "The Symphony, neither in its tone quality nor coordination, has yet grasped Mr. Rothwell's fine intellect as a conductor."⁷⁵ These and other reviews—praise for the conductor, demerits for the orchestra—continued as the season went forward.

Unfortunately, 1920 was not a happy season for either the Stadium Concerts or the Stadium conductor. Under the strains of preparing for nightly shows, Rothwell tended to program the same works over and over again. As promised, the concerts were mostly of the classical pops variety, American composers were largely ignored, and German music was once again being programmed. As the formerly complimentary *Musical America* opined at season's end, "even the Wagner programs were practically duplications of each other."⁷⁶ Moreover, Rothwell fought bronchitis for much of the season and was often replaced by substitutes.

⁷⁰ "Curtis, Vera, 1879-1962. Papers of Vera Curtis, 1907-1962 (inclusive), 1907-1943 (bulk): A Finding Aid." Harvard <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~sch00081> (accessed July 10, 2017).

⁷¹ *New-York Tribune*, "Stadium Concerts to End Next Friday Evening," 15 August 1920.

⁷² *Musical America*, "Noted Soloists Appear With Rothwell Forces at the Stadium," 10 July 1920.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Musical America*, "Rothwell Draws Throngs to the Stadium During the Week," 17 July 1920.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Musical America*, "Close of the Stadium Concerts," 21 August 1920.

Furthermore, off-stage problems resulted in the season being shortened from ten weeks to eight. The Stadium management claimed that the season was intended to last for eight weeks while the National Symphony Orchestra stated otherwise. In addition, lackluster running of the concerts resulted in winter concert prices—\$2.00 a ticket—being charged for admittance, a problem which would be eradicated in the future.⁷⁷ To make matters worse, bad weather and other factors contributed as well to an unhappy experience for Rothwell and all:

The management displayed much diffidence in judging the behavior of the weather. Repeatedly concerts were begun in the Stadium under imminent threat of a downpour, but in the hope, doubtless, that time would fight on the side of the musicians and half the program might be gotten through, but in which case the management deemed its duty toward ticket holders amply discharged. Almost invariably these calculations went awry, with the result of a wild scramble for the Great Hall that entailed confusion, discomfort, loss of time and subjection to the impudence and rudeness of officious ushers, ticket takers and other attendants, who acted toward those who paid their good money much as if they were there on sufferance.⁷⁸

These problems aside, the *New-York Tribune* praised the 1920 season, perhaps out of concern that they be continued following what may have been somewhat expected growing pains for the three-year-old festival:

A large company of men and women, able as well as unselfish, have worked hard. That their efforts are appreciated is proved by the attendance, which has averaged 6,000 a night, on occasions running up to 8,000, 9,000, even close to 10,000.

The concerts come to an end next Friday evening, thus bringing to a close a festival of music memorable and admirable in every respect. In view of difficulties successfully overcome and of the complete success from first to last, The *Tribune* begs to add its own word of hearty congratulation to words of like import spoken by multitudes.⁷⁹

Not only was 1920 Rothwell's only Stadium season (Mrs. Volpe reports only that his contract was not renewed),⁸⁰ it was also the only Stadium season for the National Symphony Orchestra, which disbanded shortly before the next summer. The National Symphony Orchestra (*née* the New Symphony Orchestra) was founded by the French-American modernist composer-conductor Edgard Varèse for the purpose of performing exclusively contemporary music. As reported by New York Philharmonic historian, Howard Shanet, Varèse excited

⁷⁷ *Musical America*, "Again the Stadium Concerts," 4 September 1920.

⁷⁸ *Musical America*, "Close of the Stadium Concerts," 21 August 1920.

⁷⁹ *New-York Tribune*, "The Stadium Concerts," 14 August 1920.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.

and charmed the women of the NSO committee—including Minnie Guggenheimer, who left the Stadium Committee for the NSO in 1919, returning two years later. His talks made modern music sound more attractive than the women ultimately found it when they heard the pieces performed. After forcing out Varèse in protest of his programming (with Mrs. Guggenheimer leading the way, according to Louise Varèse⁸¹), they replaced him with Artur Bodanzky and Willem Mengelberg, who programmed more conventional fare.⁸² Posterity has proven Varèse wrong in thinking that a full-time orchestra devoted exclusively to contemporary music could exist. However, he was correct in stating that New York was not able to support three full-time symphony orchestras performing similar music—the other two being the New York Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic Society of New York.⁸³ Players from latter ensemble played in the Stadium orchestra from 1922 to 1964. The New York Symphony Orchestra merged with the Philharmonic Society in 1928.⁸⁴

For 1921, Arthur Judson, general manager of the Stadium Concerts from 1920, as well as the Philadelphia Orchestra, engaged an orchestra made up mostly of Philadelphians. Philadelphia was soon to begin its summer concert series at Robin Hood Dell and could not allow its orchestra members to stay in New York for long. Victor Herbert and Henry Hadley led the bulk of the concerts performed by the Philadelphians.

The Stadium Committee had initially planned to field a free-lance orchestra as it did in 1918 and 1919. However, the New York musicians union, the Musicians' Mutual Protective Union (MMPU), prohibited its members from playing at the Stadium citing an agreement with the now-defunct National Symphony Orchestra. Judson responded with a public statement saying that the NSO and the Stadium Concerts were no longer affiliated and the 1921 season proceeded with mostly Philadelphia players instead of New York musicians. This was one of the reasons why the MMPU was soon separated from its parent organization, the American Federation of Musicians (AFM). In May 1922, the New York Philharmonic was installed as the Stadium orchestra; on the basis of the successful 1921 season, the Stadium Committee concluded that the Stadium Concerts needed a resident orchestra, one which came to the Stadium

⁸¹ Louise Varèse, *Varèse: A Looking-Glass Diary, Volume I: 1883-1928* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 146.

⁸² Howard Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), 232-33.

⁸³ Varèse, *Varèse*, 149.

⁸⁴ Email from Philharmonic archivist, Gabryel Smith, 25 April 2014. The orchestra's official name is still the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York. Over time, the ensemble gradually renamed itself the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, but in the phone book, it is listed under "P" for "Philharmonic." ⁸⁴

prepared to play a large repertoire.⁸⁵ Two weeks later, Judson was named the Philharmonic's manager in conjunction with his positions as manager of the Stadium Concerts and the Philadelphia Orchestra.⁸⁶

Amidst the shenanigans behind the scenes, live music was desired by New Yorkers. The first four seasons did enough to whet their appetites to justify the continuance of the Stadium Concerts. Continue they would — for over four decades.

⁸⁵ *Musical America*, "New York Philharmonic To Play At Stadium," 6 May 1922.

⁸⁶ James M. Doering, *The Great Orchestrator: Arthur Judson and American Arts Management* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 66-69.

Chapter 3

Developing an American Musical Organization:

1922-1929

The concerts from 1922 to 1929 at the Stadium showcased several of the century's noteworthy conductors, helping to launch them to international prominence. During these eight seasons, the repertoire rapidly developed from light classics fare to programs appropriate for the winter season. Audience turnout continued to be large depending on the weather and actually increased as the programs grew more redolent of the winter concert season. This period featured perhaps the greatest amount of contemporary music in the history of the Stadium Concerts with much new American music, most of it of admittedly conservative bent. Most important of all was the appearance on the Stadium programs of the music of the young American composer, George Gershwin. The advocacy of Gershwin's music, which began towards the end of this period and culminated in the annual all-Gershwin concerts from the mid-thirties on, may stand as the Stadium's greatest musical legacy. Although most of Gershwin's orchestral works and his operas were premiered elsewhere, the Stadium performances helped solidify their strong place in the concert repertoire that exists to the present time.

Soloists were used cautiously throughout this period as the Stadium acoustics, which remained somewhat troublesome throughout its existence, often were an obstacle. Initially, the soloists were relatives of such Stadium figures as Stadium Conductor Willem van Hoogstraten whose wife was the highly regarded pianist, Elly Ney. Nonetheless, from 1922 to 1929 several important early performances by future stars were featured as well as the first attempts at opera performances. Most interesting were the contests that produced some of the soloists at these early concerts; one such contest, for example, produced a major find in the African American contralto, Marian Anderson. Indeed, there was great interest in the summer musical goings-on at the City College campus, with increasing national pride for an institution that became the envy of Europe as well as of other American musical cities.

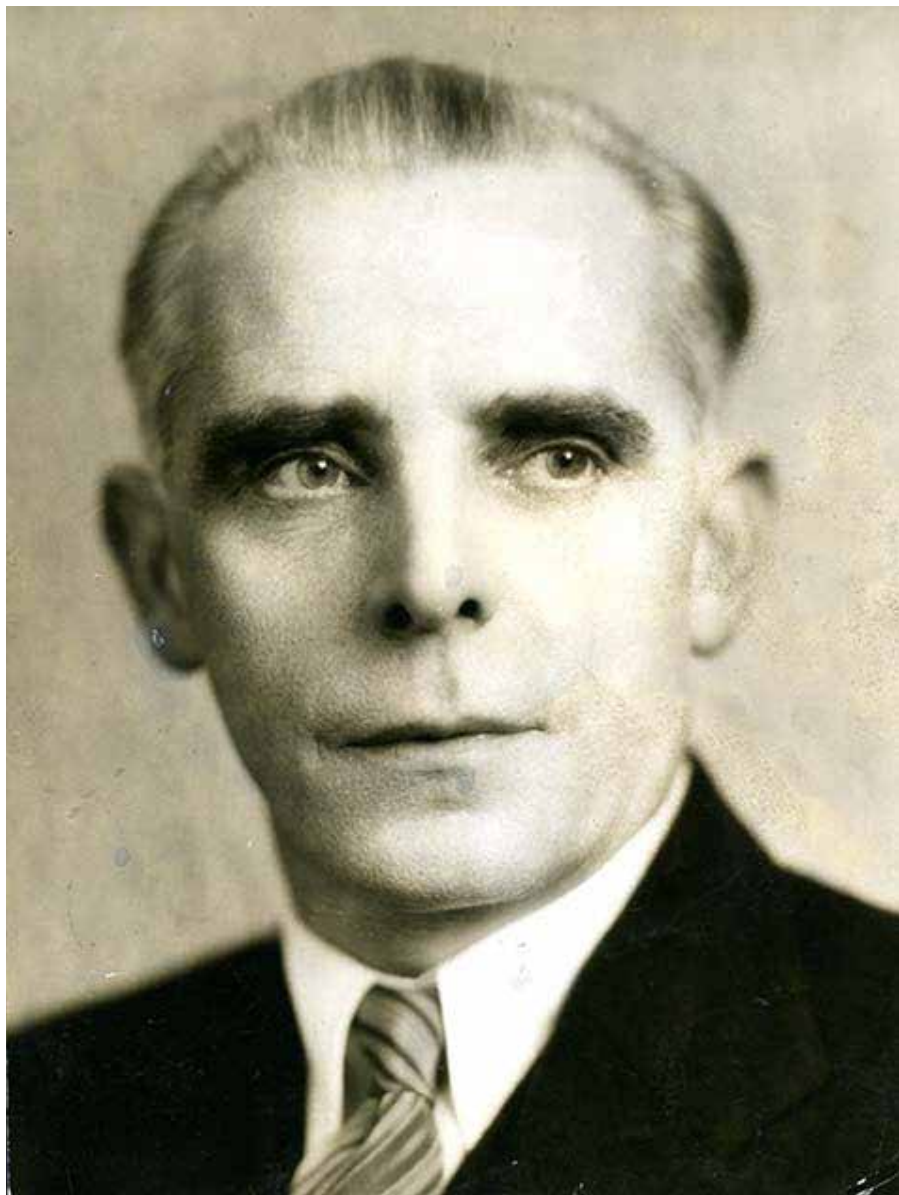


Figure 4: Willem van Hoogstraten, principal conductor of the Stadium Concerts from 1922 to 1938, had an enthusiastic following despite mixed-to-negative reviews from the New York critics.

Courtesy of the Multnomah County Library, John Wilson Special Collections (ID: JWpic_000049).

Willem van Hoogstraten, Man and Musician

From 1922 to 1938, Dutch conductor Willem van Hoogstraten served as principal conductor of the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts. After 1938, except for several seasons in the forties during which Alexander Smallens served as unofficial principal conductor,¹ the Stadium Concerts were presided over by a series of guest conductors. In effect, Van Hoogstraten was the only true principal conductor during the New York Philharmonic's years at the Stadium.

Van Hoogstraten came from an upper-middle class family of which he was the only member with any significant musical ability. He began his violin studies at the age of sixteen and progressed so rapidly that he spent six years at the conservatory in Cologne, then followed those years with further studies in Paris and Berlin. With his wife, pianist Elly Ney, and a Swiss 'cellist, Van Hoogstraten performed and toured as a member of their trio. After a year as concertmaster of a small orchestra, he took up the baton and was appointed conductor of an orchestra in what Van Hoogstraten described as a "bathing resort." The Mayor of Crefeld, a town near Cologne, was impressed enough by the young conductor that he offered him the position of kappellmeister of Crefeld's municipal orchestra, a post he held for four years. The First World War interrupted Van Hoogstraten's term at Crefeld, and he spent the next six years as an active guest conductor, leading orchestras throughout Europe.²

In 1921, Ney came to America on a contract and Van Hoogstraten accompanied her. Together, they performed at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic on 2 January 1922. Both received rave reviews for the concert, which consisted of Brahms's two piano concertos as well as his Haydn Variations.³ As *Musical America's* critic commented:

Mr. Van Hoogstraten, who was making his debut here, impressed one as a musician of fine taste, inclined to do his best in the very music in which he introduced himself. Precision he knows and he covers a fine dynamic range. His conception of the variations was delightfully free from the theatric, and his management of the orchestra's part in the concertos was carried out with scrupulous care and a fine attention to detail, very much in the spirit of Brahms. He will be heard again with great interest.⁴

¹ Unlike van Hoogstraten, Smallens never did carry a formal title.

² *The Evening Telegram*, "Van Hoogstraten, Busiest Maestro in World, Has Little Time to Play," 12 July 1929. In the interview, Van Hoogstraten did not mention the European cities in which these orchestras were located. The name of the Swiss 'cellist is unmentioned as well.

³ This concert was given as a memorial for Brahms, who had died twenty-five years earlier in 1897.

⁴ *Musical America*, "Brahms Memorial Concert," 7 January 1922.

Two weeks later, van Hoogstraten and Ney presided at the Philharmonic again, this time in a program consisting of Max Reger's Variations and Fugue on a theme of Mozart, Opus 132, Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 15, K. 450, and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. Richard Aldrich of *The New York Times* offered the following:

Mr. Van Hoogstraten produced a singularly clear and lucid interpretation, even in the polyphony of the fugue. His reading of Tchaikovsky's symphony was effective and full-bodied, but not riotous. He made an excellent impression as a conductor.

Mme. Ney played Mozart's concerto with clarity, with charm of style, with the urbane gayety that is of the essence of the music. It justly aroused enthusiasm and she gave as an encore Mendelssohn's "Rondo Capriccioso" in a delicately restrained manner that admirably fitted it.⁵

On the strength of these two successful Philharmonic concerts, Van Hoogstraten was appointed co-conductor (with Willem Mengelberg) of the orchestra, a post he held for two seasons (1923-25), when he left to become music director of the Portland (Oregon) Symphony Orchestra.⁶ It is also worth mentioning that Van Hoogstraten's 1922 Philharmonic concerts had won the significant admiration of Judson. The general manager and artists' manager personally recommended the Dutchman for the Philharmonic post, having secured him as a client during the 1922 Stadium season.⁷

The year before he was appointed to his New York winter concert season position, Van Hoogstraten was hired to lead the Stadium Concerts which, as mentioned earlier, featured the Philharmonic Society as the official Stadium orchestra from 1922 on.⁸ Van Hoogstraten shared half of the six-week 1922 Stadium season with Henry Hadley, conducted the entire 1923 Stadium season by himself(!), and presided over the majority of the concerts during the fifteen summers that followed (the number of his concerts decreasing somewhat as the summers progressed).

During his several seasons as co-conductor of the Philharmonic, Van Hoogstraten, in Howard Shanet's words, "was not a serious challenge to Mengelberg's preeminence."⁹ As will be seen, the New York critics were, on the whole, not kind to the Dutchman, subjecting him to the same harsh treatment

⁵ Richard Aldrich, "Music." *The New York Times*, 17 January 1922.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Doering, *The Great Orchestrator*, 98.

⁸ Howard Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), 240.

⁹ Ibid., 251.

Figure 5: Conductor-composer

Henry Hadley was a tireless champion of American music as well as a frequent conductor at the Stadium during the Roaring Twenties.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives



suffered by most Philharmonic conductors. But despite the New York critics' misgivings, Van Hoogstraten, a man of confidence, charisma, and enthusiasm, met with success in Portland and had a significant following in New York. Certainly, the Stadium Concerts would not have been such a success without his participation. Van Hoogstraten was handsome and dramatic on the podium, and he was admired for his Beethoven and Tchaikovsky interpretations.

Initially somewhat reluctant to embrace new repertoire, Van Hoogstraten became increasingly dedicated to performing American compositions as the decade progressed, even going so far as to lead Gershwin in his own works. Van Hoogstraten took well to America, becoming an American citizen in 1925. As he announced to the press, "It is my purpose to make the United States my permanent residence and I believe that this country, which now maintains five of the greatest orchestras in the world, will increase the number many fold in the near future."¹⁰

In turn, Stadium audiences took well to Van Hoogstraten, at least initially. The 1922 season ended with Van Hoogstraten received a large basket of flowers from the audience following the series' final performance of Tchaikovsky's Sixth. After the intermission, the musicians, according to *Musical America*, "stood and greeted him with an ultramodern volley of dissonance from their instruments

¹⁰ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Willem van Hoogstraten To Become U.S. Citizen," 26 August 1925.

that testified to their sincere admiration.”¹¹ However, several weeks earlier, that same publication gave a word of warning: “Whether some of the characteristics of his leadership which make for popularity will subsequently react against his position with those who dislike visual illustration of the music played remains to be seen.”¹² In short, from the beginning, Van Hoogstraten’s penchant for acrobatics on the podium divided critics and audience members alike.

After the opening concert of 1924, the Dutchman received praise for his renderings of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony and Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The opening concert also included Johann Strauss’s *Tales from the Vienna Woods* and Wagner’s Prelude to Act I of *Die Meistersinger*. Pitts Sanborn of the *New York Telegram-Mail* remarked, “Mr. Van Hoogstraten is a most energetic and demonstrative conductor. He dispensed with the usual baton last evening, but he conducted with both fists, both arms, both shoulders and all of his mobile, unrelaxing visage. The orchestra followed his lead with alertness and energy, and the audience greeted the end of each composition and each section of a composition with prolonged applause.”¹³ In praising Van Hoogstraten, the *World* critic noted that the “conductor brought to it (the music on the program) a fresh and nervous vitality which blotted out the memory of some opaque readings toward the weary end of the (previous) season.” This last comment may have referred to the punishing 1923 season during which Van Hoogstraten conducted every concert.¹⁴ The mixed-to-rave reviews continued throughout the mid-twenties, along with positive notices from non-music critics such as Ann Bridges from the *Raleigh News and Observer*, who later wrote on 29 June 1924 of the “slender young man who was conducting with such grace, force and appreciation of beauty” and of the “certain wisecracks [who] will tell you that some 20 years or so from now he will be considered one of the greatest living conductors.”¹⁵

Such sentiments failed to hold as the decade progressed. Van Hoogstraten was increasingly seen as a second-tier conductor, his readings lacking depth, polish, and insight. Sanborn criticized a 1928 Schubert centenary concert for poor tempo choices.¹⁶ In 1929, Pierre Key wrote, “Now Mr. Hoogstraten has conducting talent, and does very well. But he appears not to have gone much beyond the point he reached some half dozen years and more ago. The Van

¹¹ *Musical America*, “New York Stadium Series Reaches End in Rousing Ovation by Record Audience,” 26 August 1922.

¹² *Musical America*, “Summer Throngs Acclaim Old and New Conductors At New York Stadium,” 5 August 1922.

¹³ Pitts Sanborn, “Large Audience at the Stadium,” *New York Telegram Mail*, 4 July 1924.

¹⁴ *New York World*, “Music,” 4 July 1924.

¹⁵ Ann Bridges, “At the Stadium,” (*Raleigh North Carolina*) *News and Observer*, 29 June 1924.

¹⁶ Pitts Sanborn, “Stadium Celebrates Schubert Centenary,” *Evening Telegram*, 17 August 1928.

Hoogstraten visual picture is, for some, more to be commended than the aural one.”¹⁷ More harshly, Charles D. Isaacson noted at the end of the 1929 season, “People like [Van Hoogstraten] for his sincerity and his utter courage. They are disappointed at his childishness and puerility on many occasions and are doomed to wonderment that he held his post so long. If he succeeds in coming back another year, it will be impossible to wrest the conductorship of the Stadium concerts from him.”¹⁸ These and other negative reviews piled up throughout the decade while the more positive receptions enjoyed by a number of guest conductors highlighted Van Hoogstraten’s inadequacies.

Nonetheless, Van Hoogstraten maintained his enthusiasm for the American concert world throughout the decade. He became increasingly determined to enlarge the repertoire with American and somewhat challenging modern fare while frequently waxing poetic about the Stadium Concerts and his belief that good music attracts large audiences. He was delighted by the increasing number of complete symphonies on Stadium programs. The Dutchman singled out Brahms, whose orchestral works often attracted large audiences, as a remarkable composer for outdoor concerts: “You would hardly pick him out as a possible outdoor favorite, but he has certainly become so. It proves over again that popular music means good music.”¹⁹ He supported the general Stadium policy of avoiding lectures on music appreciation, believing that good music speaks for itself: “Anybody, it seems to me, who does not live on the surface of life, but whose mind and heart are open to the mystery of life and the beauties of nature, should be able to understand the language which best expresses those things, and that is the language of music.”²⁰ In comparing American concert life to that of Europe, Van Hoogstraten stated, “It wouldn’t be graceful for me to seem critical of Europe, but I think I can say that the thing Europeans should seek in America and be sure of finding is an enthusiasm, a receptivity and a freshness in listening that European audiences do not have.”²¹ In short, Van Hoogstraten, for a number of years, remained enthusiastic about America and, in particular, about Lewisohn Stadium in the face of often harsh critical receptions and competition from the increasingly frequent guest conductors.

¹⁷ Pierre Key, “Pierre Key’s Music Article,” (Waterbury, Conn .) *The Democrat*, 27 July 1929.

¹⁸ Charles Isaacson, “Music,” *New York Evening Telegraph*, 31 August 1929.

¹⁹ *Musical America*, “Hoogstraten Discusses Indoor and Outdoor Concerts,” 3 July 1926.

²⁰ Grace Overmyer, “Willem Van Hoogstraten Hails The Rise of Music in the West,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 June, 1927. Stadium programs had program notes (Philharmonic annotator Lawrence Gilman wrote the notes for the Stadium Concerts in the twenties) and occasionally featured writings on music, but the concerts featured music without any verbal commentary.

²¹ *Evening Telegram*, “Van Hoogstraten, Busiest Maestro in World, Has Little Time to Play,” 12 July 1929.



Figure 6: Van Hoogstraten, Lewisohn, and members of the New York Philharmonic at the Stadium in 1922, the first year in which the Philharmonic was the Stadium orchestra.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-105-

Five Guest Conductors

Among the Stadium guest conductors during this period were several international figures and one future star in his New York concert debut. Together, the following five conductors combined with other lesser baton-wielders in making Lewisohn Stadium one of New York City's major cultural attractions in the twenties. They also moved the concerts away from pops fare to winter fare with occasional forays into contemporary music.

In terms of those forays, Henry Hadley was perhaps the most active. A prolific composer as well as a conductor, Hadley conducted a great deal in Europe from 1904 to 1909, led the Seattle Symphony in 1909, was at the helm of the San Francisco Symphony from 1911 to 1916, and spent the better part of the twenties as associate conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.²²

²² Richard Jackson, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Henry Hadley." London: Macmillan, 2001.

As mentioned earlier, Hadley conducted at the Stadium during the 1921 season and presided over the first three weeks of the six-week 1922 season, with Van Hoogstraten covering the last three weeks. In his final Stadium appearances, he led the orchestra in one week of the 1926 season.

Admired for his Beethoven and Wagner, Hadley's greatest dream was, in Shanet's words, "that the Philharmonic might finally ally itself with the American composer."²³ This dream came to naught with the rise of Toscanini at the helm of the Philharmonic and the subsequent conservatism of the Philharmonic repertoire. Hadley and the Philharmonic parted ways after 1926, and Hadley later formed the Manhattan Symphony Orchestra, which he led from 1929 to 1932. During its short run, this orchestra featured at least one contemporary American composition on each of its programs.

Most of Hadley's Stadium programs reflected his later programming. Hadley was criticized for the unadventurous nature of the American music he chose—music that usually reflected his own late-Romantic compositional tastes. Hadley conducted a significant amount of his own music in 1922 and 1926, but with several exceptions, only his concert overture, *In Bohemia*, had frequent performances at the Stadium in the several decades following his departure from the Philharmonic. Not long afterwards the work, like all of Hadley's compositions, failed to hold a place in the twentieth century concert repertoire.²⁴ A march by Hadley, entitled *The Stadium*, was included in the opening concert of the 1922 season (the first work performed after intermission). This piece was described by the *New-York Tribune* as "a pleasant, spirited composition, written in Mr. Hadley's usual facile vein, and dedicated to Adolph Lewisohn."²⁵ The rest of the program was devoted to Wagner excerpts. Hadley remained a tireless champion of late Romantic American composers until his death in 1937; his symphonies and other works were frequently performed by American orchestras for at least several decades more. Hadley was also a leader in the birth of the Tanglewood Music Festival as well.

Somewhat less innovative in his programming though occasionally bold, Hungarian maestro Fritz Reiner arrived at the Stadium with a flourish, taking the audiences and most if not all of the critics by storm in his 1924 New York concert debut. Reiner conducted for a fortnight in 1924 and one week in 1925, then made frequent appearances at the Stadium throughout the thirties and forties.

²³ Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 272-73.

²⁴ *In Bohemia* was programmed once during each of the following summers: 1922, 1925, 1931, 1933, 1938 (twice), 1941, 1942, and 1945.

²⁵ *New-York Tribune*, "Great Stadium Audience Hears First Concert," 7 July 1922.

Prior to his first appearance at Lewisohn Stadium, Reiner had conducted at Budapest and Dresden. It was in Dresden that he conducted the first German production of Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, an opera that had received its world premiere in Vienna in 1919.²⁶ Throughout his career, Reiner was very much associated with Strauss and he treated Stadium audiences to a good deal of the German composer's output.²⁷ After conducting throughout Europe and South America, Reiner became music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 1922 where he immediately made an impact, leading the orchestra in its first performances of such works as Respighi's *The Fountains of Rome*, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, and Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*, along with works by Strauss and such Americans as Deems Taylor (*Through the Looking Glass*) and Edward MacDowell (*Indian Suite*). Immediately before his Lewisohn Stadium concerts, Reiner scored a triumph as guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.²⁸ On the strength of his successes in London and Cincinnati, and after an entire season under the direction of Van Hoogstraten, Reiner's New York debut was eagerly anticipated by critics and Stadium concertgoers.

Judging by most of the reviews, Reiner's 1924 stint at the Stadium was a great success. His opening concert on 24 July consisted of Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, Brahms's Fourth Symphony, Stravinsky's *Fireworks*, and Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*. The *New York Telegram* hailed both the short Stravinsky piece and the conductor, commenting on the latter, "He proved himself a conductor of cherishing care and communicative energy, blessed with a clear decisive beat."²⁹ T. G. A. Goldsmith of the *New York Herald Tribune* hailed Reiner as "a mighty man of music" and proclaimed, "it became evident to the prophets of the Divine Muse (and there were plenty of them present) that they must take Fritz Reiner into grave account when making their local predictions hereafter." Goldsmith praised his performance of the Strauss as being particularly authoritative.³⁰ The *New York Evening Post* noted, "In addition to his authoritative baton he has the most expressive left hand seen in action in this town in many a day."³¹

²⁶ Bryan Gilliam and Charles Youmans, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Richard Strauss." London: Macmillan, 2001.

²⁷ Philip Hart, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Fritz Reiner." London: Macmillan, 2001.

²⁸ *New York World*, "London Debut for Fritz Reiner," 11 May 1924.

²⁹ *New York Telegram*, "Fritz Reiner at the Stadium," 25 July 1924.

³⁰ T. G. A. Goldsmith, "Fritz Reiner Triumphs in Stadium Debut," *New York Herald Tribune*, 25 July 1924.

³¹ *New York Evening Post*, "Fritz Reiner Takes the Baton over the Philharmonic in the Stadium," 25 July 1924.

But during the course of Reiner's fortnight at the Stadium, at least one critic levied criticisms. In his column, "Star Dust and Fiddlesticks," *The New York Daily Telegraph's* Theodore Stearns commented, "Mr. Reiner is a purposeful conductor—sometimes grimly so—and his strong points seem to be phrasing, great sostenuto and fastidious attention to detailed nuances. He thereby achieves the effect of decided variations of strict tempo without, however, in the least disturbing the fundamental rhythm. Fritz Reiner is a conductor of unquestionable authority, but I think he is greater as a scholar than he is [as] a conductor."³² Writing of Reiner's performance of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony a few days later, Stearns decried the maestro's "analytical version" of the emotive masterpiece, noting, "There was great clarity in Mr. Reiner's interpretation. Perhaps at the sacrifice of that emotionalism so commonly associated with this great symphony of pathos."³³

Reiner was sometimes charged with coolness and metronomic conducting throughout his otherwise distinguished career which, following his departure from Cincinnati in 1931, included a music director post in Pittsburgh and frequent performances at the Met. He then had a much-acclaimed nine-year tenure at the helm of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with which he made many recordings. As with his fellow Hungarian, George Szell, Reiner's performances and recordings were sometimes criticized for being overly concerned with precision and accuracy at the expense of warmth and character. The charges against both conductors continue to this day along with criticisms of the dictatorial means by which they achieved their mostly impressive results.

Nonetheless, both conductor and audience were much enraptured by the two-week adventure during which Reiner rarely strayed from well-established repertoire.³⁴ At the close of his 3 August concert, Reiner addressed the audience, stating, "I have enjoyed my two weeks at the Stadium with an orchestra like the Philharmonic. I have also been greatly impressed by the Stadium audiences. I doubt whether, even in the most musical of European centers, so large a number of music enthusiasts would be found to attend similar concerts night after night."³⁵ And after his final concert of 1924, Reiner said to the audience, "In all my experience I have never found a more appreciative and intelligent audience than this. To produce good music, it is important to have a good

³² Theodore Stearns, "Star Dust and Fiddlesticks," *New York Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1924.

³³ *Ibid.*, 29 July 1924.

³⁴ Notable exceptions were his Strauss concerts, his August 3 performance of Deems Taylor's *Through the Looking Glass Suite*, and an August 4 concert featuring works by Percy Grainger. Reiner also conducted music by his Hungarian compatriot Leo Weiner on 27 July.

³⁵ *The New York Times*, "New York's Musical Taste," 3 August 1924.

orchestra and an appreciative audience. Oh, yes, I forgot to say that a capable conductor is quite essential.”³⁶

Whereas Reiner and most of the other Stadium conductors of the Twenties were young talents of varied merits, an older man, Frederick Stock, who conducted one week in 1926 and two weeks in 1927, was arguably the most established conductor to appear at the Stadium during that time period. Music Director of the Chicago Symphony for over two decades prior to his first Stadium appearance,³⁷ Stock met with a triumphant reception, embraced as a master conductor. While emphasizing traditional repertoire, Stock did conduct a fair amount of new American music, such as (in 1926) *1914 – Tragic Overture* by Edward Collins, *Masquerade* by Carl McKinley, a waltz entitled *Indian Summer* by Philharmonic violist Allan L. Langley, and *Symphony No. 2 in G minor (After Walt Whitman)* by Chicago Symphony assistant conductor Eric De Lamarter. During his two-week engagement in 1927, Stock was less accommodating to the Americans, leading the orchestra in a suite for orchestra, *Primeval* by Charles Skilton, and Deems Taylor’s *Through the Looking Glass*, as well as in Thorwald Otterstrom’s *American Negro Suite*. Stock’s advocacy of twentieth-century music also included two 1927 performances of three pieces from Gustav Holst’s *The Planets*, plus Debussy’s *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun*, Respighi’s *The Pines of Rome*, and Sibelius’s *Finlandia*. In Chicago, where Stock also founded the orchestra’s Childrens’ Concerts and the Chicago Civic Orchestra, he was even more adventurous, performing such composers as Mahler, Schoenberg, Hindemith, and Prokofiev, among others. He was also a tireless champion for benefits and full-year seasons for the musicians, eventually playing a large role in the creation of Chicago’s Ravinia Festival.³⁸

But the major events of Stock’s engagements were his Wagner concerts as well as his 1926 performances of Verdi’s *Requiem*. Following his 18 August 1926 Philharmonic debut, *The New York Times* enthused, “With all these years of experience behind him, it was natural to find in Mr. Stock a conductor of ripened wisdom and quiet authority.”³⁹ *The Evening Telegram*’s Pitts Sanborn⁴⁰ and the *Herald Tribune*’s Francis D. Perkins⁴¹ also chimed in with rave reviews. A 27 July 1927 concert dominated by Wagner excerpts elicited the following from *Musical America*:

³⁶ Bernhard Steinberg, “Rousing Ovation for Reiner as He Bows Farewell,” *New York American*, 7 August 1924.

³⁷ Stock held the Chicago position from 1905 until his death in 1942.

³⁸ Michael Steinberg, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Second ed., s.v. “Frederick Stock.” London: Macmillan, 2000.

³⁹ *The New York Times*, “Stock Makes Debut With Philharmonic,” 19 August 1926.

⁴⁰ Pitts Sanborn, “Another Stadium Guest,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 19 August 1926.

⁴¹ Francis D. Perkins, “Frederick A. Stock Takes Over Baton For Stadium Music,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 19 August 1926.

Some of the finest Wagner playing that has been heard in New York in years lifted Mr. Stock's first program to a level not often attained in the series. The guest leader, cordially saluted on his entrance, began with the unthrilling 'Academic Festival' Overture of Brahms, following this with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. This latter work, he gave an unusually likable publication. While striking no new paths in his grasp of the symphony and playing it on the whole in a manner not discernibly unlike that of most of his predecessors, Mr. Stock nevertheless contrived to impart a spontaneity and venal charm which were irresistible. His leading of this well-worn music was conducive also to clarity, balance and precision and his hearers were quick to express their appreciation at the partial revivifying of what is to them, no doubt, a favorite.

Excerpts from 'Siegfried' and 'Die Walküre' occupied the second half of the list, and in his reading of them Mr. Stock did some of the most impressive work that metropolitan audiences have heard from him. The splendid defiance and nobility of the Ascent of Brünnhilde's Rock have seldom been breathed with the fire that consumed, as they were on Wednesday. A furious and stormy performance of the second act introduction to 'Walküre' and the subsequent 'Ride' vied with the 'Siegfried' music in stirring one to the utmost. In conclusion, Mr. Stock fanned anew the quieter flames of the Magic Fire Scene with the sentient familiarity of an old friend.⁴²

Particularly attention-getting during Stock's week in 1926 was his 20 August performance of his own recomposition of Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony. Inspired by his Chicago predecessor Theodore Thomas's desire to save the symphony's musical material from Schumann's shortcomings as an orchestrator (Thomas died soon after expressing that desire), Stock made an "attempt to bring to new life a work for which I have always felt the most affectionate regard."⁴³ Not only did Stock significantly enlarge the orchestra (to the point of including a relatively large array of percussion), but, according to the program notes, "He added a measure here and there, in order to give greater clarity to Schumann's thought. He replaced the coda of Schumann by another, in which, however, he employed Schumann's material."⁴⁴ The result met with a mixed reception. The *New York Times* praised the Schumann-Stock *Rhenish* for "enriching the sound and giving a better carrying power, in the open air especially. The symphony, under those conditions, was heard with ease, even in

⁴² *Musical America*, "Stock Gives New Scores at Stadium," 6 August 1927.

⁴³ *The New York Times*, "Stock Conducts Stadium Concerts – Oratorio Society in Wagner Evening," 15 August 1926.

⁴⁴ *The New York Times*, "Stock's Third Concert," 21 August 1926. None of the critics described which material was used in Stock's coda.

its delicate scherzo”.⁴⁵ *Musical America* saw beyond the immediate considerations of the Stadium acoustics, commenting:

The ‘Rhenish’ would have to be rewritten entirely to give it the pellucid glow of works that are regarded as models of its type of scoring. Stock’s recension, thorough-going as it is, is not radical enough to accomplish this. Instead, it raises a question of preference—whether the individual listener would rather have his Schumann a little befuddled and incoherent; or vicariously emphasized, with an accentuation that is a little foreign to its creator and suggestive of the later era of Richard Strauss.⁴⁶

Latter-day audiences have chosen the former, whatever the shortcomings. To-day, most conductors do not change the orchestration at all, although George Szell’s classic recordings of the symphonies with the Cleveland Orchestra, which do have alterations, are still highly regarded.

Somewhat less established as a master-conductor than Stock at the time of his first Stadium appearance in 1927, Pierre Monteux was nonetheless a force to be reckoned with, having achieved his earliest fame as a conductor leading Serge Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes, where he conducted the world premieres of such major scores as Debussy’s *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, Ravel’s *Daphnis and Chloé* and Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, and earned a reputation as a proponent of early twentieth-century French music. After spending five years as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Monteux was engaged in 1924 as second conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, where he spent ten seasons. Monteux founded the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris in 1929 (leading the orchestra until 1938), served as music director of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra from 1936 to 1952, and ended his years as Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, signing a twenty-five-year contract to lead the orchestra in 1961. He was 86 at the time.⁴⁷

Monteux’s sole week in 1927 was a highlight of the season despite his rather unadventurous programming—music by Debussy and Stravinsky aside, as well as a poorly-received new work, *Ciacconna Gotica* by Cornelius Dopper—and at least one critic’s reservations concerning his Wagner interpretations in his 11 August Stadium concert. On the latter, the critic of the *New York Evening Telegram* wrote, “Mr. Monteux’s genius does not lie in the realm of Wagner. Had the program consisted of Massenet excerpts the mood of the French conductor would, perhaps, have fitted into the scheme of things.”⁴⁸ It was not

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *Musical America*, “Schumann, Plus Stock; The ‘Rhenish’ Recast,” 28 August 1926.

⁴⁷ Martin Cooper, José Bowen, and Charles Barber, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Pierre Monteux.” London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁴⁸ *New York Evening Telegram*, “Monteux Conducts Wagner,” 12 August 1927.



Figure 7: Pierre Monteux was a favorite of Stadium-goers, George Gershwin and Minnie Guggenheimer.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives
(ID: 800-037-33-010).

the last time Monteux would have such criticism directed at him. Despite his great love for Beethoven and Brahms, many music lovers throughout his career and beyond were more apt to turn to him for French and Russian music. One day earlier, Monteux had greatly impressed the critics with his rendering of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. Wrote Charles H. Noble in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "the wreck on the iron cliff in the final movement surpassed anything this reviewer has heard in a score of performances of the work."⁴⁹ And The *New York Times* referred to the concert as "in some respects the high spot in a season notable for artistic musical achievement," also praising the climax of the final movement.⁵⁰

Monteux did not appear again at the Stadium until 1946, after which he appeared in every summer through 1960 excepting 1957 and 1959.⁵¹ During those later years, Monteux established himself as the favorite conductor among Stadium audiences in a poll taken by Lewisohn Stadium.⁵² He was also the personal favorite of Minnie Guggenheimer, who, according to her daughter, Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer, sat through his concerts to the very end, something she rarely did for other conductors.⁵³ Indeed, the Chairwoman of the Stadium Concerts maintained a greater fondness for him than for most of the other Stadium performers, stating in later years, "Pierre is more my own age and we enjoy getting together to talk about the old times. Besides, I'm still hoping I can get him to tell me whether he dyes his moustache white or his hair black!"⁵⁴ It is worth mentioning that Monteux was also Gershwin's favorite conductor even though the Frenchman never conducted his music at the Stadium.⁵⁵

Monteux seemed to have had mixed feelings about the Stadium Concerts. Asked by his future biographer (and later New York Philharmonic historian) John Canarina if he was conducting at the Stadium in 1960, the maître replied, "Yes, but you know it is so désagréable there, and that woman (Minnie Guggenheimer), each year I ask her for more money, hoping she say no, and each year she say yes!"⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Charles H. Noble, "Stadium Recital Wins Ovation for Monteux," *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 August 1927.

⁵⁰ *The New York Times*, "Monteux Receives Ovation at Stadium," 11 August 1927.

⁵¹ John Canarina, *Pierre Monteux, Maître* (Pompton Plains: Amadeus Press, 2003), 175.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵³ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother Is Minnie*, 122-23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵⁵ Howard Pollack, *Gershwin: His Life and Work* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 126.

⁵⁶ Canarina, *Pierre Monteux, Maître*, 291.



Figure 8: Fritz Reiner, with Stadium Chairwoman Minnie Guggenheimer, had a long association with Lewisohn Stadium highlighted by Wagner concerts in the thirties.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-097-44-012). Photo Larry Gordon.

Particularly captivating for early Stadium audiences was British conductor Albert Coates, who maintained a relationship with Lewisohn Stadium well into the thirties and provided Van Hoogstraten with tough competition. After studying music in Germany, Coates's early experiences in Russia as music director at the Mariinsky Theatre brought him into contact with many of the country's leading composers and musicians, notably Scriabin, whose music he frequently conducted. He later became a regular conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra and, from 1923 to 1925, the first music director of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. Like Hadley, Coates was also a prolific composer of rich, late Romantic music, some of which he introduced to Stadium audiences during his frequent appearances.⁵⁷ Coates appeared for one week in 1928 and conducted nineteen concerts in 1929.

Coates's 1928 repertoire was mostly straightforward. Particularly notable was his performance of Act 2 from Gounod's *Faust*. Given in concert form, this performance represented the first attempt at opera performance at Lewisohn Stadium. His 1929 engagement included his own scherzo, "The Elopement of the Spinster Aunt" from *The Pickwick Papers* and work by other prominent British composers (including Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony*) as well as two performances of Verdi's Requiem. Although Coates programmed little American music, he conducted Gershwin's *An American in Paris* on 30 August 1930.

Coates impressed with his forceful interpretative manner as well as his imposing physique. He conducted without a baton and utilized vigorous hand and arm gestures.⁵⁸ His first concert of 1928, consisting of Brahms Fourth Symphony, excerpts from Prokofiev's *The Love of Three Oranges*, Respighi's *The Fountains of Rome*, and Liszt's *Les préludes*, met with a mixed reception, Perkins taking him to task for excessive speed and rejecting Respighi's *The Fountains of Rome* as "not uniformly interesting".⁵⁹ But by the end of his week in 1928, he had won over critics and audience members, Sanborn praising him for conducting Wagner and Tchaikovsky with his "customary zeal" and declaring his stint at the Stadium an "extraordinarily successful week of guest conducting."⁶⁰ In between, Coates led a 29 July performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scherherazade* that the *New York Evening Post* dubbed "a different presentation from Van Hoogstraten's.

⁵⁷ Michael Kennedy, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Albert Coates." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁵⁸ *The New York Times*, "Coates Conducts At Stadium Concert," 27 July 1928.

⁵⁹ Francis D. Perkins, "Albert Coates Makes Debut At the Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 July 1928.

⁶⁰ Pitts Sanborn, "Coates' Farewell," *New York Evening Telegram*, 2 August 1928.

Its changes of pace, its accents and colors were more strongly diversified and disclosed vividly the melodic beauties.”⁶¹ Many favorable comparisons with the Stadium’s principal conductor were made as the summers progressed. The raves for Coates continued through his longer engagement in 1929, culminating in his being presented at the intermission of the final concert with a bust of himself created by Russian sculptor Joseph Hovall on commission from “a group of admirers” among the Stadium audience members.⁶² Evidently, the orchestra approved of the British maestro as well, performing “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow” and “Auld Lang Syne” in tribute to him at concert’s end.

What can be seen from the work of these five important guest conductors is that already the concept of the summer outdoor orchestral concert had its large number of defenders and followers. The conductors, be they up-and-comers or established maestros, saw that the Stadium Concerts aided and abetted their professional reputations while the music itself was of great importance to the audiences even when veering somewhat from the mainstream. At the same time, the audiences and even orchestra members were highly involved in the festival not just as musicians and listeners but also as judges of the conductors as well. The Stadium Concerts not only were a success with the masses during the Roaring Twenties, but they were a necessity. It was obvious that the New York experiment needed to be tried elsewhere in the country.

Other Conductors

Notable among the other Stadium conductors of the twenties was the original Stadium conductor, Arnold Volpe. Volpe led the Philharmonic in one concert in 1924, as well as three dance concerts in 1927 and the second half of a concert in 1936. These may have been acts on the Stadium Committee’s part to partially soothe whatever wounds still lingered within Volpe. For his 12 August 1924 concert, Volpe conducted Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony and Wagner excerpts. Perkins wrote of the Tchaikovsky, “Mr. Volpe obtained a performance of much brilliance and dramatic effectiveness. He seemed to favor unusually marked variations of pace, especially in the first movement, where some of the slower passages were, perhaps, unduly halting.” In Wagner’s “Prelude and Isolde’s Liebestod” from *Tristan und Isolde*; “Siegfried’s Rhine Journey” from *Die Götterdämmerung*; the “Good Friday Spell” from *Parsifal*; and the Overture to *Rienzi*, Perkins wrote, “Mr. Volpe seemed less successful than before from the

⁶¹ *New York Evening Post*, “Music,” 30 July 1928.

⁶² *New York Evening Journal*, “Coates Given Bust of Himself at Stadium,” 16 August 1929.

dramatic standpoint.”⁶³ Ultimately, Volpe never established a reputation as a major conductor, spending most of the remainder of his career in academia.

The remaining Stadium conductors from 1922 to 1929 were, in chronological order, Nikolai Sokolov, founding conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra; Rudolph Ganz, pianist and one-time music director of the St. Louis Symphony; Clifford Vaughan, best known as a film-score composer;⁶⁴ Italian maestro Bernardino Molinari; Graham Harris, who accompanied the Denishawn Dancers in 1928; Hans Lange, Philharmonic assistant concertmaster and assistant conductor; David Mendoza, who conducted the Capitol Theatre Orchestra,⁶⁵ accompanied Anna Duncan during the 1929 Stadium season, and later found success in Hollywood as a musical director;⁶⁶ and conducting his own *An American in Paris* on the 26 August 1929 concert, George Gershwin.

Repertoire

During the summers 1922 to 1929, the Lewisohn Stadium programs swiftly moved away from lighter summer fare to winter concert repertoire. Significant emphasis was placed on American music with a growing emphasis on one American composer in particular. Audiences actually increased in size as the Stadium Concerts embraced performances of complete symphonies and, occasionally, revolutionary creations. As noted before, Stadium conductors were intrigued by the spirit of adventure that attended the summer evenings at City College and often programmed accordingly.

Early on in the New York Philharmonic's summers at the Stadium, concerts were often leisurely affairs featuring popular classics, single symphonic movements and heavily cut complete symphonies.⁶⁷ In 1921, the Stadium Concerts experimented, alternating pops concerts with more challenging fare, concluding even then that Stadium audiences desired more of the latter than

⁶³ F. D. Perkins, “Music Lovers at the Stadium Welcome Volpe,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 August 1924.

⁶⁴ Msn.com Movies, “Clifford Vaughan,” <http://movies.msn.com/celebs/celeb.aspx?c=362054&mp=b>.

⁶⁵ http://www.cinemaweb.com/silentfilm/bookshelf/6_mendo3.htm. Mendoza's associate conductor and concertmaster at the Capitol Theater was Eugene Ormandy (1899-1985), who achieved great success at the Stadium accompanying Anna Duncan on 25 and 26 August 1930 (see pp.).

⁶⁶ The Internet Movie Database, “David Mendoza,” <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0579250/>.

⁶⁷ In 1922, Stadium concerts featured eleven complete symphonies and four partial symphonies. It is unclear to what extent the “complete” symphonies were presented with cuts.

the former.⁶⁸ On 20 July 1922, the concert featured the complete Tchaikovsky Fifth Symphony. On 7 August of that same summer, the concert concluded with the entire Franck Symphony in D minor. And on the final program of the summer (16 August), the Stadium audience requested and received the complete Tchaikovsky Sixth. Several other complete symphonies were given that season as well. As the decade progressed, the concerts comprised of short works came to be replaced by concerts that featured symphonies and symphonic poems, usually on the first half of the program, followed by shorter overtures and tone poems. Consider the following example of the 7 July 1922 Stadium concert program:

1. ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK:
Prelude to "Haensel [Hänsel] and Gretel"
2. MORITZ MOSZKOWSKI: Suite in F Major, op. 39
-INTERMISSION-
3. WILLIAM HENRY HUMISTON: Southern Fantasy
4. JOHANN STRAUSS: Waltz, "From the Vienna Woods"
5. WILLEM MENGELBERG: Barcarolle
(orchestrated by Henry Hadley)
6. PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 4 in F minor,
op. 36:
a) Pizzicato ostinato b) Finale
Henry Hadley, conductor

And, while never extending its programming into the ultra-modern, the Stadium Concerts became increasingly demanding of audience and orchestra throughout its first several decades, with frequent forays into recent and somewhat thorny works.

Nationalist pride characterized the Stadium Concerts as critics and music-lovers were proud of having a festival that was rapidly becoming the envy of European music centers. When Pietro Mascagni scoffed at what he perceived to be the provincial and musically illiterate nature of the American concertgoer, deciding against coming to America in the summer of 1924, he was sharply rebuked. As Perkins wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "It really seems that a considerable number of New Yorkers go to a Beethoven and Brahms program,

⁶⁸ *New-York Tribune*, "Improved Setting For Next Year's Stadium Concerts," 28 August 1921.

for instance, at the Stadium, because they want to hear Beethoven and Brahms. And it is hardly too rash to say that they must have at least a certain conception of artistic things.” Perkins went on to note the impact of the Stadium programs on the summer concerts at Philadelphia’s Robin Hood Dell and Los Angeles’s Hollywood Bowl.⁶⁹

By 1926, the light classics programs were pretty much a thing of the past. On opening night, an audience of 10,000 filled the rocky seats to hear Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, Ernest Schelling’s *A Victory Ball*, Bach’s *Air on a G String*, and Respighi’s *The Pines of Rome*.⁷⁰ Several days later, Lawrence Gilman, critic and program annotator for both the Stadium Concerts and the Philharmonic winter season, hailed the Stadium Concerts for having resisted the desire to stay within the confines of the early seasons (as did the summer concerts in Boston) and for paving the way for the similarly successful summer festivals in Los Angeles and Philadelphia. As he wrote:

The Stadium directors have talked little about ‘educating the public,’ perhaps disliking the hint of solemn priggishness in the term. What they have quietly and unostentatiously done is to give a new meaning to the phrase ‘popular music.’ Once upon a time, ‘popular’ music meant, let us say, things like Gounod’s ‘Funeral March of a Marionette,’ the ballet music from Rubinstein’s ‘Feramors,’ a waltz by Nicodé or Volkmann, a Fantasia on themes from ‘Le Prophète,’ selections from Moszkowski’s ‘Boabdil.’ Today, ‘popular music,’ as justifiably interpreted by the conductors and directors of the Stadium concerts, means the Ninth and Fifth and Third and Seventh Symphonies of Beethoven, the First of Brahms, the Big Three of Tchaikovsky, the One of César Franck; it means ‘Petrushka’ and ‘Scheherazade’ and ‘Till Eulenspiegel’ and ‘L’Après-midi d’un Faune,’ and all of Wagner.⁷¹

Six days later, the *New Yorker* concurred: “It is the best entertainment that New York provides, summer or winter. It is civilized, because it holds that art was not designed as a god to be worshipped by the world, but to amuse the world, seriously and lightly—to ease the effort of living by its perfection. There is no fatuous attempt to educate the audiences into appreciation. There is simply excellent music in a cool and soothing scene—laughter, and urbanity, and good humor.”⁷²

⁶⁹ F. D. Perkins, “The Seventh Season; A Retrospect and Summary,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 August 1924.

⁷⁰ F. D. Perkins, “10,000 Applaud Philharmonic as Stadium Opens,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 July 1926.

⁷¹ Lawrence Gilman, “Summer Music Now and in the Mauve Decade,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 July 1926.

⁷² *The New Yorker*, “Sacre du Printemps,” 17 July 1926, 23.

Following letters to local papers criticizing van Hoogstraten's controversial 1926 performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Arthur Judson replied: "The Stadium Concerts began in the typical 'pop' manner. It was not until the old Brighton Beach standards were abandoned and what might be called Philharmonic standards were substituted that the Stadium Concerts began to have their present musical significance. When von Suppé, Mascagni and Balfe were Stadium favorites, an audience of 5,000 was nearly a miracle. Today, an audience of this size might be considered somewhat small. The favorites seem to be Wagner, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and the most important of contemporary composers."⁷³

The Canon

In terms of the mainstream European fare, a typical Lewisohn Stadium season during the Roaring Twenties was that of 1924. The following composers were most represented during that summer: Wagner (35); Tchaikovsky (24); Beethoven (13); Richard Strauss (12); Liszt (9); Johann Strauss (9); Brahms (8); Mendelssohn (6); Rimsky-Korsakov (5); and Weber (5).⁷⁴ Wagner was often the sole composer on certain concerts, made up as they were of excerpts and overtures from his operas. As is the case with other composers, several Wagner compositions, such as the Overture to *Tannhäuser* (14 and 29 July) and the "Prelude and Liebestod" from *Tristan and Isolde* (14 and 27 July, 10 August), for example, were performed more than once. Most popular among Beethoven's works from the beginning of the Stadium concerts were his *Eroica*, Fifth, and Seventh Symphonies. His Ninth was premiered that summer and was performed twice. Following those performances, the Ninth was performed every summer until 1934, after which the work was heard at the Stadium only eight times more. The other Beethoven symphonies either took longer to catch on or were performed sporadically. Richard Strauss was usually represented by his six major symphonic poems, already established members of the concert hall canon.

Troublesome acoustics combined with street noises remained a problem throughout the Stadium's run. Nonetheless, the management made fairly successful attempts at bringing in vocal soloists and choral forces to perform such works as Beethoven's Ninth and Verdi's *Requiem*. The first performance of the former, which took place on 18 July 1924, attracted an estimated 13,000 to

⁷³ Arthur Judson, letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, 3 August 1926.

⁷⁴ F. D. Perkins, "The Seventh Season; A Retrospect and Summary," *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 August 1924.

15,000 music lovers and was judged successful.⁷⁵ The *New York Herald Tribune* wrote positively of Van Hoogstraten's conducting, mentioned some brass problems in the *finale*, and stated that the soloists "sang the recitative with a purity of voice and diction that made the words audible to the last rows."⁷⁶ Among those soloists was the Scottish baritone Fraser Gange, a frequent participant in the Stadium Concerts throughout the twenties. Gange was also a soloist in the following summer's performances of Verdi's *Requiem*. The concerts involved eight extra trumpeters mounted on the several towers that surrounded the stage. Perkins wrote that whereas Beethoven's Ninth "tries its soloists hard, it gives them a fairly short period of activity. But in the Verdi work the soloists are called on for well over half, it seems, of a period of over ninety minutes. It is almost an axiom that a solo singer will be hard put to it outdoors but considering this last night's quartet preserved an unexpectedly good general average."⁷⁷ The *New York Times* hailed the Stadium's first Verdi *Requiem* as "a flawless performance, one which will long remain in the memories of those present."⁷⁸

Throughout the twenties, the Stadium audiences were invited to select the program for seasons' final concerts. Not too surprisingly, Beethoven's stentorian Fifth Symphony was often chosen. Somewhat surprisingly, Tchaikovsky's depressing Sixth Symphony (*Pathétique*) was also performed on a number of these occasions. In 1926, some rather curious works received at least one vote. These compositions included Varèse's ultramodern *Amérique*, Honegger's *Pacific 231*, *Petrouchka* and *The Firebird* by Stravinsky, and the First and Third symphonies by Mahler.⁷⁹ One can only speculate as to who would request these pieces and why.

Contemporary and Recent European Music

Although the Stadium concerts programmed a number of premieres and novelties, most of them tonal and traditional, neither the Second Viennese School⁸⁰ nor any serial or aleatory composition was ever heard throughout the festival's history. The revolutions of such early twentieth century composers

⁷⁵ *New York World*, "Crowd of 15,000 Rushes to Hear Beethoven's 9th," 19 July 1924.

⁷⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, "13,000 Hear 9th Symphony of Beethoven," 19 July 1924.

⁷⁷ F. D. Perkins, "Soloists and Chorus Give Requiem With Stadium Orchestra," *New York Herald Tribune*, 19 August 1925.

⁷⁸ *The New York Times*, "Verdi's 'Requiem' wins Plaudits At Stadium," 19 August 1925.

⁷⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Pathetic Symphony Leading Number at Stadium Tomorrow," 30 August 1926.

⁸⁰ With one exception: on 25 July 1952 Schönberg's tonal *Verklärte Nacht* was heard at the Stadium.

as Janacek and Nielsen took place around the time of the Stadium Concerts' demise; they too were never performed. Nonetheless, those involved with the summer musical events at the City College campus during the twenties took great pride in the number of novelties offered, both European and American. And a sizable number of contemporary pieces were offered, from lesser-known works by familiar recent composers, to those by recent composers less established in the repertoire, to nineteenth century and turn-of-the-century composers whose place in the canon had yet to be determined.

The first group of established recent (or living) European composers included the earlier-mentioned Strauss, Sibelius and Debussy. Although his six major symphonic poems, as well as certain highlights from his operas *Salome* and *Der Rosenkavalier*, were frequently performed, Strauss's other purely orchestral works made little headway at the Stadium. On 1 August 1924, Reiner presented Strauss's elephantine *Alpine Symphony*, a long post-romantic symphonic poem which calls for enormous orchestral forces. The work was coolly received by the New York critics. Wrote T. G. A. Goldsmith in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "its mountain peaks are foothills, sturdy, perhaps, but no challengers to the heights of heaven; it paints in glowing tonal pigments one of the most magnificent sunsets in music, but it never soars upward to the sun meridian. And there is so much of it that is claptrap, so much that is mannered naïveté, so much that is flatulently sentimental."⁸¹

The *New York Daily Telegraph* concurred, commenting that "Nature cannot be imitated. It can only be suggested."⁸² Both reviews commented on the orchestra's uneven playing, which probably was to be expected given the work's fierce technical demands and the limited rehearsal time available. Other lesser-known or recent Strauss creations performed during the Roaring Twenties, such as the *Burleske* in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 53, the *Serenade for Wind Instruments*, op. 7, and the *Love Scene* from *Feuersnot*, were also greeted with middling reviews. Audience reception is a matter of conjecture.

In the twenties, Sibelius was represented mostly by three popular short works: *Finlandia*, *The Swan of Tuonela*, and *Valse Triste*, which were each performed several times during the course of the decade. Acceptance of some of the symphonies and the Violin Concerto came during the following decade. One notable Sibelius novelty was the 9 July 1926 first Stadium performance of his longer tone poem, *En Saga*. The work received mixed reviews. *The New York Sun* praised the work of Van Hoogstraten and the orchestra more than

⁸¹ T. G. A. Goldsmith, "Rare Symphony of Strauss on Stadium Bill," *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 August 1924.

⁸² *New York Daily Telegraph*, "Strauss's 'Alpine' Symphony," 2 August 1924.

the piece itself.⁸³ The *Herald Tribune* felt that *En Saga* “did not seem to be one of the Finnish composer’s greatest works. Interest sometimes flagged, though there was, not to the fullest degree, the characteristic Sibelius flavor, ability to charm with somber color.”⁸⁴ The biggest praise came from *The New York Times*, which dubbed the work “the extraordinarily individual expression of a sincere and original nature. Its closely woven and colorful orchestration had almost a kaleidoscopic effect.”⁸⁵

Recently departed French composer Claude Debussy was well-received at the Stadium, the initial shock of his revolutionary creations already smoothed over less than a decade after his untimely death from cancer in 1918. Most often performed were *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* and *Fêtes* from his three-movement orchestral suite, *Nocturnes*. The first Stadium performance of “Iberia” from his suite, *Images*, elicited praise from Goldsmith: “Why this enchantingly lovely translation of the carnival and romantic atmosphere of Spain is not more often given is a matter that passes understanding. To call the music effective is an almost grotesque understatement. It is to be hoped that New York will not have to wait until next summer to hear this work performed again.”⁸⁶

But the contemporary European composer who most provocatively captured the attention of Stadium audiences in the twenties was the Russian dynamo, Igor Stravinsky. First performed at the Stadium by Reiner in his first New York concert (his short work, *Fireworks*), Stravinsky was frequently represented, usually by suites from two of his Parisian ballets, *The Firebird* and *Petroushka*. These three compositions were the most performed of Stravinsky’s at the Stadium during the Philharmonic’s four-decades-plus run as Stadium orchestra. Few of the later works were ever heard on the City College campus.

However, the three Parisian ballets were enough to establish Stravinsky’s place as a popular contemporary composer among Stadium audiences. Following the 29 July 1925 Stadium performance of the *Firebird Suite*, the *Herald Tribune* declared, “It probably would strain the truth unduly to call Stravinsky a popular composer, using ‘popular’ in its Tchaikovskyesque sense, but the ‘Firebird’ suite showed last night marked symptoms of being a very popular piece” and noted that the work’s “triumphant climax (was) followed by long-sustained applause.” The work received thirty-eight Stadium performances from its first in 1924 to its last in 1963, firmly established as a modern classic.

⁸³ *The New York Sun*, “Stadium Concert,” 10 July 1926.

⁸⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, “‘En Saga,’ by Sibelius, Is Rendered at Concert,” 10 July 1926.

⁸⁵ *The New York Times*, “Philharmonic at its Best,” 10 July 1926.

⁸⁶ T. G. A. Goldsmith, “Philharmonic Plays ‘Iberia’ at Stadium,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 July 1924.

Moreover, prior to the start of the 1926 season, the *Musical Leader* hailed Stravinsky as a master orchestrator whose works, unlike those of many of his contemporaries, played well in the open air of the Stadium:

Stravinsky has studied the possibilities of each instrument with extraordinary care and thoroughness. He knows when to use massed tone and when to use poly-instrumentation. He also knows how to revert to elemental effects, such as reiterated rhythmical figures, accented pulse beats and repeated motives, around all of which he weaves a complicated web of dissonance that seems less disturbing to the average listener because of the definiteness with which he repeats his musical ideas. It is to be hoped from the standpoint of an interesting experiment that Van Hoogstraten will make good his promise (or threat) to play "Le Sacre du Printemps" during this summer.⁸⁷

The "threat" was made good. *The Rite of Spring* was boldly programmed by Van Hoogstraten on the 26 July 1926 concert and greeted with some boos and whistles, along with some wild applause that brought the conductor back to the podium for three bows. Critical reception was mixed, with *The New York Times* commenting that:

"Mr. Stravinsky's dissonances did not sound so nerve-wracking as they did in the concert hall. To certain ears they carried the imagination back to the infancy of the race, when rhythm was everything and tunefulness a matter of no consequence. In this Mr. Stravinsky seems to have read the prehistoric mind with a great deal of accuracy.

He was at his most descriptive in the first part, where his different themes, explained to some extent by the program, could be followed without difficulty. It was received with some reserve by the audience.

The second part, with its quickly changing episodes, seemed to arouse the public to the proper pitch of enthusiasm, in spite of persistent booing by one man and whistling by several others. Mr. Van Hoogstraten, who had conducted the score indefatigably, was recalled to the rostrum three times."⁸⁸

Still, the adventure inspired some howls of derision from many listeners, some of whom sent angry letters to various newspapers complaining of Stadium programming. One John Whitmore wrote to *The New York Times*:

This work is unfitted for performance at a Stadium concert, not only because of its tremendous technical difficulties, but also because it cannot be regarded as music even by the greatest stretch of imagination. Not because it is some-

⁸⁷ *The Musical Leader*, "Music in New York," 13 May 1926, 8.

⁸⁸ *The New York Times*, "Rite of Spring' Has Hearing at Stadium," 27 July 1926.

thing revolutionary, something to which we are not accustomed, but because it violates every conceivable principle of harmonic and melodic beauty.⁸⁹

In response, Judson sent his own letter to *The Times*:

We have no apology to make for Mr. Van Hoogstraten's inclusion of 'Sacre du Printemps' on his program; in fact, we are delighted to know that the performance of this work can arouse such violent disputation. Some of us like it and others of us don't, but it cannot be denied that it represents an unusual achievement in music and that it deserves a hearing, even if it is difficult to whistle! We also think that it may be interesting for your readers to know that "Le Sacre" outdrew any 'popular' program ever presented at the Stadium.⁹⁰

The large audience at the July 1926 concert notwithstanding, the detractors of *The Rite of Spring* ultimately had their way. The work received only one more Stadium performance—in 1962, under the direction of Robert Craft in an all-Stravinsky concert.

Both Mahler and Bruckner received Stadium performances in the 1920s. Neither caught on and they were rarely performed at the Stadium from then on. The big American Mahler-Bruckner boom of the 1960s commenced around the time of the death of the concerts at Lewisohn Stadium. Prior to then, Stadium audiences were not ready for hour-long-plus symphonies, Beethoven's Ninth aside.

Preceding the 16 July 1926 Stadium premiere of Mahler's First Symphony was a 10 July article by the *Evening Telegram's* Pitts Sanborn anticipating the looming performance. In this article, he queries:

Can it be that Gustav Mahler's music is at least destined to become 'popular' in that very New York which so long turned it a deaf ear and a cold shoulder? Certainly, there is something significant in the fact that the Stadium concerts are announcing one of Mahler's symphonies for next Friday night. It will be interesting to observe how the summer public reacts to a composer whom local winter audiences, made up of the supposedly musical elite, have been only too ready to reject. To be sure, the symphony announced is only the relatively unpretending and frankly tuneful first. However, even that is an entering wedge. We shall see how far Mr. Van Hoogstraten succeeds in driving it home on Friday. To bait this dubious Stadium novelty there are grouped with it in one program such never failing favorites as the 'Nut-cracker' suite of Tchaikovsky and Liszt's 'Les Preludes.'⁹¹

⁸⁹ John Whitmore, letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, 3 August 1926.

⁹⁰ Arthur Judson, letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, 3 August 1926.

⁹¹ Pitts Sanborn, "Daring at the Stadium," *Evening Telegram*, 10 July 1926.

One week later, Mahler's First was received politely but without great enthusiasm. As Perkins wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune*:

There seemed to be nothing indigestible last night in this symphony, which has not the length which marks much of Mahler's symphonic music, taking between forty-five and fifty minutes, and, while the first and last movements have one or two points when interest wears rather thin, has much of distinct charm, much of the rather naïve, pleasing melody which is typical of Mahler's music. We would not, indeed, call it one of the world's great symphonies. There are not, at least for us, marked heights and depths of inspiration, but it sounded, in general, very agreeably.

Incidentally, the appearance of a Mahler symphony on a Stadium program strikingly indicates the catholicity of the Stadium repertoire, which embraces far more than the limited group of 'surefire' works, as Mahler is, on the whole, considered anything but 'surefire' in this country, although he has his warm supporters who feel that he should be.

Last night's audience, about 6,500 in number, was, while not wildly enthusiastic, cordial, their applause gaining warmth with each movement, with a very respectable volume of plaudits at the close. The symphony, despite necessarily limited time for rehearsal, was well performed by the Philharmonic musicians under Willem van Hoogstraten's direction.⁹²

Reviews in *The New York Sun*⁹³ and *The New York Times*⁹⁴ shared Mr. Perkins's lukewarm sentiments and also mentioned the Stadium audience's polite but tempered response. Van Hoogstraten conducted Mahler's First again on 11 August 1933. From then on, neither the First nor any other complete Mahler symphony was heard at Lewisohn Stadium. However, isolated movements from the First, Second, and even the Seventh were performed on occasion. On 27 June 1942, Alexander Smallens conducted *Kindertotenlieder* with baritone Blair McClosky as soloist.

Perkins was similarly less than enthusiastic about Bruckner's Fourth Symphony when Van Hoogstraten and the Philharmonic presented it on 20 July 1926: "The symphony has its attractive, even its impressive qualities. It has a tuneful romanticism, a naïve sincerity often giving a pleasing sense of freshness, an unsubtlety [*sic*] which is not necessarily a drawback, and outspoken, effective climaxes. But it is not concise—it took forty-seven minutes last night, but that was with cuts—and, in the first movement, Bruckner does not handle his themes adroitly enough to avoid a certain sense of iteration."⁹⁵

⁹² F. D. Perkins, "Mahler Symphony Opens a Pleasing Stadium Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 July 1926.

⁹³ *The New York Sun*, "Mahler's First Symphony Played at Stadium," 17 July 1926.

⁹⁴ *The New York Times*, "Novelty at the Stadium," 17 July 1926.

⁹⁵ F. D. Perkins, "Bruckner Work Heard for First Time at Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 July 1928.

A 22 August 1929 performance of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony, again led by van Hoogstraten, was favorably reviewed by the *Evening Telegram*, the critic decrying the composer's neglect in the concert hall.⁹⁶ There followed Van Hoogstraten's 21 August 1930 rendering of the Eighth, received with mixed notices.⁹⁷ After a 21 July 1931 performance of the Fourth, Bruckner was never heard again at the Stadium save for his Overture in G minor, performed on 23 July 1941. It is worth mentioning that Bruckner was rarely performed during the winter season during the twenties and thirties. The New York Philharmonic digital archives as of 28 April 2016 lists very few Bruckner performances from the era. In fact, the Philharmonic did not perform at all such symphonies as the Third and Sixth. On 17 February, Otto Klemperer led the Seventh, while Willem Mengelberg took on the Second on 17 December 1925, for example. Neither conducted at the Stadium.

A number of Stadium premieres by contemporary European composers stretched the ears of New York music lovers during these years. Honegger's ode to locomotives, *Pacific 231*, caused something of a sensation in its first Stadium realization on 26 July 1925.⁹⁸ *The New York Times* noted, "As chance would have it, just as (Van Hoogstraten) began its preliminary measures four fire engines roared past the Stadium, whistles blowing and bells clanging. It gave an air of realism to the scene that would have done a stage manager great credit."⁹⁹ *Musical America* was less than kind to the noisy showpiece: "A virtuoso piece with a few brilliant effects, but curiously unsatisfying, it was coolly received by the audience, and there were a few hisses when the ultras' seemed bent on unduly loud applause."¹⁰⁰ Notwithstanding its contentious Stadium premiere, *Pacific 231* was performed again on 25 August 1925 and heard eight more times during the Stadium's run. Among Honegger's other compositions, only his Prelude to *The Tempest* was undertaken.

Receiving its Stadium premiere on 7 July 1926 (the first concert of the 1926 season) was Respighi's *Pini di Roma*. The critics were harsh in their condemnation of the soon-to-be essential concert canon showpiece. Olin Downes of *The New York Times* thundered, "'The Pines of Rome' carried well [in the Stadium's problematical acoustics], though it may be asked to what avail? What poor music this is! How devoid of originality, how obviously derived from other scores!" and referred to the concluding movement (The Appian Way)

⁹⁶ E. Garrett, "Bruckner Work Well Produced," *Evening Telegram*, 23 August 1929.

⁹⁷ The *Adagio* of the Eighth Symphony was performed by itself on 17 August 1924, the first Stadium performance of any Bruckner work.

⁹⁸ *Pacific 231* had received its world premiere over a year earlier on May 8, 1924. Serge Koussevitzky led the orchestra of the Concerts Koussevitzky at the Paris Opéra.

⁹⁹ *The New York Times*, "Applaud van Hoogstraten," 27 July 1925.

¹⁰⁰ *Musical America*, "N.Y. Stadium Series Attracts Big Audiences," 1 August 1925.

as “the March à la Mussolini.”¹⁰¹ Perkins was somewhat more complimentary, writing, “the work is not remarkable for originality, but the rousing final climax is markedly stirring”¹⁰² These criticisms notwithstanding, *The Pines of Rome* was performed again on 24 August of that same summer and received an additional fifteen Stadium hearings. Among Respighi’s other compositions, *The Fountains of Rome* was performed almost as often and was featured in the final Stadium concert, conducted by Lamberto Gardelli, which took place on 13 August 1966.

As mentioned earlier, the Philharmonic played “Mars”, “Venus” and “Jupiter” from Holst’s *The Planets* on 30 July and 3 August 1927 (Frederick Stock conducting) and performed these three movements again, plus “Uranus,” on 18 August 1932. “Mars” was featured on the Denishawn Dancers concerts of 1931. These were the only performances for Holst at the Stadium. Following the 3 August 1927 concert, the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote:

The most impressive part of the work last night, and quite pertinently, was the tone poem to Mars, an aggressively rhythmic creation with grandiose themes for the brass which most effectively suggested the harsh stern tread of a gigantic god of war. Mr. Holst’s tribute to the astrological significance of Venus brought a little too much peace to the orchestra. The movement was beautifully scored, but there was not much vitality to the mood aroused and the thematic material employed did not possess much distinction.

There was a more individual flavor to the music for Jupiter and again as in the first section of the suite last night the themes for the brass were most happily chosen. Mr. Stock played the first and last sections of excerpts with resounding fervor.¹⁰³

Kodaly’s *Hary Janos Suite* received two performances in 1928, the Stadium premiere on 11 July and a second hearing on 19 August. Van Hoogstraten led on both occasions. The work was heard again at the Stadium on a number of concerts and had company with the composer’s *Galanta Dances* and *Maroszek Dances*. The *New York Post* critic failed to anticipate the suite’s later popularity, writing, “One reads the note and hears the music and smiles in recognition, but the music lacks charm and interest for its own sake. It is not one of the pieces of enchantment that draw audiences to concert hall and stadium whenever they are found on advance programs.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Olin Downes, “12,000 at Opening Stadium Concert,” *The New York Times*, July 8 1926.

¹⁰² F. D. Perkins, “10,000 Applaud Philharmonic as Stadium Opens,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 July 1926.

¹⁰³ ¹⁰³ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Gustav Holst Suite Played By Orchestra at Stadium,” 4 August 1927.

¹⁰⁴ *New York Post*, “Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra Stadium Concert With Hungarian Music Given Indoors,” 12 July 1928.

Almost as challenging to the ears as *The Rite of Spring*, Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite* was given its only Stadium performance on 16 July 1929, Van Hoogstraten conducting. The *Evening Telegram* summed the adventure up thusly: "What with invocations to prehistoric deities, wild pagan dances and a chaos of savage ritual, the Lewisohn Stadium last night was no scene of peaceful doings. For the Prokofieff [*sic*] 'Scythian Suite' had crashed the gate, and Hell with all its raging furies had broken loose."¹⁰⁵ While this raging modern work was not programmed again at the Stadium, some of Prokofiev's other compositions were. The pieces include the Classical Symphony, the Third Piano Concerto, the *Lt. Kije* suite, and the suite from *The Love for Three Oranges*. Indeed, he ultimately became one of the Stadium's most frequently performed twentieth-century composers, his music often a well-liked blend of acidic modernism and considerable fidelity to western musical form.

Lastly, Ralph Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* received its Stadium premiere on 5 August 1929 under the direction of Albert Coates. The four-movement program symphony was heard again eight days later and during the seasons of 1931, 1941, 1947, and twice in 1954. In his review, Perkins admired certain tone paintings but expressed doubt over the work's endurance in popularity,¹⁰⁶ while the *Evening Telegram* characterized the audience's reception of the symphony as "lukewarm to be gentle."¹⁰⁷

American Music

During the 1920s, the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts performed much contemporary and recent American music. The composers featured were almost exclusively tonal, writing in a late-Romantic idiom similar to that propagated by Richard Strauss. However, some allowed for such pyrotechnics as jazz elements and sound effects reminiscent of those to be found in Honegger's *Pacific 231*.

The New York Philharmonic's Americanization of the repertoire began prior to the beginning of the 1922-23 winter concert season. Before opening night, Chairman of the Board, Clarence Mackay, who served as president of the Postal Telegraph Company and joined the Philharmonic after serving on the board of the National Symphony Orchestra, announced several projects intended to create a bigger audience. One was an extensive educational program which involved concerts all over the New York tri-state area and New England. The other was entitled the "Greater Americanization of the Philharmonic." As he stated in his announcement:

¹⁰⁵ *Evening Telegram*, "Prokofieff's Music Overpowers Stadium," 17 July 1929.

¹⁰⁶ Francis D. Perkins, "British Work Is Introduced to The Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 August 1929.

¹⁰⁷ *Evening Telegram*, "Coates Repeats Triumph of 1928," 6 August 1929.

The Directors have felt that the development of music in America has reached the point where an organization such as the *Philharmonic*, should offer definite encouragement to the native American composer of orchestral music. With this idea in mind, they have engaged Mr. HENRY HADLEY as *Associate Conductor*, with instructions to examine the scores of compositions submitted by American composers and to perform certain concerts of the year those scores which, in his judgement, seem to merit presentation.... Adequate rehearsals will be given to works and the concerts at which they will be played will give them the widest possible hearing.¹⁰⁸

Shanet reports that while the orchestra did not perform significantly more American music than it did under its most recent principal conductor, Josef Stránský, the plan was carried out in a more organized fashion and was well-received by critics and audience members. He also states that the composers chosen for the six concerts in question were, like Hadley, conservative in their art. Such composers included Deems Taylor, George Chadwick, and, of course, Hadley himself. Few works by these composers are performed today.¹⁰⁹ But the Americanization of the *Philharmonic*, which may have come about partially due to post-war anti-German sentiment, was extended to Lewisohn Stadium as well—with far greater success, it can be argued.

At the Stadium as well as at Carnegie Hall, Henry Hadley embraced the cause with vigor. During his three-week Stadium engagement in 1922, all but three of his concerts featured at least one American composition. The American composer he championed most often was himself. In 1922, Stadium audiences were treated to seven different Hadley creations, including the aforementioned march, *The Stadium* and his then-popular *In Bohemia*. Hadley also conducted William Henry Humiston's *Southern Fantasy*, MacDowell's Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, op. 23 and Suite in A minor, op. 42, Victor Herbert's *Irish Rhapsody*, Henry Gilbert's *Indian Sketches*, and Deems Taylor's *The Siren Song*. Four years later, six of Hadley's seven 1926 concerts also featured American compositions. In addition to Felix Borowski's *Semiramis*, Herbert's Serenade for Strings, William Schroeder's *The Emperor Jones: An Impression of Eugene O'Neill's Play*, and William McCoy's Prelude to Act III, from his opera, *Egypt*, Hadley conducted his own Third Symphony on 7 August and his symphonic poem *The Culprit Fay* on his final concert on 10 August.

A critic for the *Musical Courier*, writing in the 12 August 1926 issue, summed up Hadley's proclivities as composer and American music champion as follows:

¹⁰⁸108 Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 235.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 236.

The very magnitude of Mr. Hadley's output is a certain indication of its salient character—spontaneity. This does not imply cheapness, else the extraordinary recognition of his ability could not have been achieved, and it does not imply hasty work. The gift of melody is his in greater degree, perhaps, than it is of any other contemporary American composer, and he has the courage to write melody in his works without straining after recondite and extra-musical effects and atmosphere. His music is always sane and inspiring. It is modern in freshness and buoyant individuality, and it is written with sufficient regard for established principles in art to gratify those whose taste and judgment still incline to formal expression.¹¹⁰

In other words, Hadley's music and that of those he conducted offered little to ruffle the sensibilities of audiences accustomed to a steady diet of Beethoven, Brahms, and the young Richard Strauss. It was to the latter in particular that Hadley's music was often compared. The scherzo of his Third Symphony was regarded by *The New York Times* critic as similar to Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* while the work as a whole eschewed aggressive dissonances in favor of broad melody and conventional harmonies.¹¹¹ Three days later, *The Times* again noted Strauss's influence in Hadley's *The Culprit Fay*.¹¹² Another example, *In Bohemia*, is an unabashedly tonal work in E-flat major which follows the sonata-allegro form to the letter, makes no concession to popular music (as is not the case with the second movement of Chadwick's Second Symphony), and sounds a great deal like Schumann.

Hadley's tendency to rehash music by established European composers in his creations extended to some of the other composers programmed by him. *Semiramis*, a tone poem by Felix Borowski (1872-1956), the English-born program annotator of the Chicago Symphony, was performed by Hadley on 5 August. While the *Herald Tribune* noted the audience's polite reception and found the work competent though with musical ideas that "fell short of the caliber needed to mark it as great,"¹¹³ *The New York Times* noted the debts of certain passages to *Tristan*. Perhaps more radical among the Hadley-conducted American works was William Schroeder's *The Emperor Jones*, which, according to *The New York Times*, "was very well-received, principally because of its descriptive character and the easily recognizable influence of negro music and negro jazz."¹¹⁴ This was not the last time that such influences found favor with Stadium audiences.

¹¹⁰ *Musical Courier*, "Henry Hadley Held in High Repute Both as Composer and Conductor," 12 August 1926.

¹¹¹ *The New York Times*, "Rain Interrupts Concert," 8 August 1926.

¹¹² *The New York Times*, "Farewell by Hadley His Own 'Culprit Fay,'" 11 August 1926.

¹¹³ *New York Herald Tribune*, "American Number Tops List at Stadium Concert," 6 August 1926.

¹¹⁴ *The New York Times*, "'Emperor Jones' in Musical Setting," 9 August 1926.

Aside from the Hadley-directed concerts of 1922 and 1926, significant attempts at enriching the repertoire with music by recent and living American composers were made by Van Hoogstraten and some of the other Stadium conductors. In 1923, Lewisohn Stadium held a score competition for contemporary composers. The top prize-winners were Max Kidder's *Two Interludes for Orchestra* and Nino Marcelli's *Suite Arancana*, with honorable mention going to Alois Reiser's *Prelude to Gobi* and Nathan Novick's *Russian Sketches*. *Musical America* wrote of the Kidder pieces after their performances on 2 August, "These compositions, which received a joint cash award in the contest, proved to be suavely melodious, though not exceptionally original in theme and orchestration. 'Rondel' was the more spirited of the two and showed a better distribution of the instruments in scoring. Mr. Kidder was called to the front to acknowledge the applause." Of the Reiser, which was heard two days later, he stated, "The work depicts the suffering of *Hagil*, hero of the composer's opera, upon the discovery of the faithlessness of his wife, *Iris*. The score proved appropriate to the mood and exhibited a commendable knowledge of orchestral writing." The next day, Novick's *Russian Sketches*, "struck an imaginative note with 'A Siberian Impression,' 'In a One-Horse Sleigh,' 'Chant,' and 'Dance.' The public reception was cordial and the composer was called upon to bow."¹¹⁵ After 1923, the Stadium never again held such a competition.

During the 1925 season at least two American novelties of some interest were featured. Van Hoogstraten and the Philharmonic presented the first Stadium performance of the recently deceased Charles T. Griffes's impressionistic tone poem, *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla-Khan* on 25 July. The *New York Herald Tribune* hailed the work, writing that "the beauty and imagination of the work again suggested that it would be well to play this work more often here than it has been played during the last five years."¹¹⁶ The critic's wish was granted, at least as far as the Stadium was concerned. The piece, the only one by Griffes ever to be heard at City College, received eight more Stadium performances between 1927 and 1946.¹¹⁷

On 28 July, Nikolai Sokoloff and the Philharmonic performed Charles Martin Loeffler's *Poem for Orchestra*. By the time of this performance, the Alsatian-born American composer and former member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra had earned something of a name for himself in Boston with his mystical *A Pagan Poem*, op. 14, a work which, though popular for a time

¹¹⁵ *Musical America*, "Stadium Audiences Hear Prize Works," 11 August 1923.

¹¹⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Philharmonic Triumphs With 2 American Works," 26 July 1925.

¹¹⁷ The Stadium Concerts did not take on such Griffes works as *The White Peacock* and the *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*.

in the winter repertoire, was never performed at the Stadium. The *New York Herald Tribune* critic wrote of Loeffler's *Poem for Orchestra*, "It is early Loeffler and thus not typical of the composer's musical maturity, but holds much lyric charm, freshness, and poetic feeling."¹¹⁸ *Poem for Orchestra* was performed one more time at the Stadium, on 10 July 1940. Only one other Loeffler work was heard at the City College campus: *Memories of My Childhood*, was heard on 21 July 1933. This was despite a series of passionate letters exchanged between Loeffler and the married but somewhat flirtatious Minnie Guggenheimer, covered in detail in *Mother is Minnie*.¹¹⁹ As the authors wrote, "exactly what he saw in or wanted from Mother—other than the most obvious championship of his works among the soloists and conductors of the National Symphony and the Stadium Concerts—is still a matter of some conjecture."¹²⁰

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony opened the 1926 season. After intermission came Ernest Schelling's *A Victory Ball*, a symphonic poem that had been performed twice in 1925. This work, which has since fallen into obscurity, proved popular with early Stadium audiences; it was performed nine more times at the Stadium following the 7 July opening night concert of 1926, two more times in 1926 alone (19 and 31 July). Following that performance, Winthrop P. Tryon wrote in the *Christian Science Monitor*:

The piece has been well-received by the American public from the time of its first production. A sign of success is that the score has been published in pocket form, and that copies were sold on the Stadium grounds along with miniature texts of the Beethoven fifth symphony. Truly things begin to go well with the native cause.

But if the 'Victory Ball' contains a passage unmistakably American, it abounds with episodes that are Russian, French, Italian, or what you please. Rimsky-Korsakoff seems to be a favored model.¹²¹

Ernest Schelling was the first conductor of the Philharmonic's Young Person's Concerts, which may have enhanced the work's popularity. The piece combines impressionistic elements with military themes (such as "Taps" in the work's final bars) and, in a middle section depicting war, the oft-used *Dies Irae*. Happier music in the early parts are redolent of the tango, to the point of employing castanets. All of this is in service to present, in musical tones, a bitter anti-war statement at a time when the nation had mixed opinions about the

¹¹⁸ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Showers Force Philharmonic From Stadium to Hall," 29 July 1925.

¹¹⁹ Untermyer and Williamson, *Mother Is Minnie*, 161-70.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹²¹ Winthrop P. Tryon, "'Victory Ball' on First Program of Stadium Concerts," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 8 July 1926.

recent war. *A Victory Ball* was inspired by an anti-war poem by British poet, Alfred Moyes; the final stanzas are "Victory! Victory!/On with the dance/Back to the jungle/The new beasts prance./God, how the dead men/Grin by the wall,/Watching the fun/Of the Victory Ball." Listening today, the present writer feels that the work does not sound too indebted to Rimsky-Korsakov. It is a bit more individual if lacking the Russian's penchant for memorable melodies.

As for the earlier-mentioned Stock-led performances of American music, several are notable. The 21 August 1926 concert featured novelties, Chicago native Edward Collins's *1914* and New Englander Carl McKinley's *Masquerade*. Collins's work reverberates with the tensions of the coming World War, with a figure towards the work's conclusion reminiscent of "Taps," as was the case with Schelling's *A Victory Ball*. McKinley's piece alternates between waltz-like figures and echoes of jazz. Perkins was impressed with both works, although he found *Masquerade* to be somewhat uneven, accusing the latter of "thinness" and "diffuseness" in its middle section. Still, he was impressed, stating, "both composers should be worth watching."¹²²

The 23 August 1926 concert presented a more ambitious Stadium premiere: Symphony no. 2 in G minor, after Walt Whitman, by Chicago Symphony Orchestra assistant conductor Eric De Lamarter.¹²³ The origins of the symphony suggest a growing dissatisfaction with the European character of many American compositions of the time. And, in particular, they also indicate the developing notion that in jazz, or at least, American popular music of the time, lay salvation for American classical music. As Perkins wrote, the symphony "was the fruit of an idea suggested by Edward C. Moore, music critic of 'the Chicago Tribune,' who demanded a real American symphony, with 'jazz' in it." He then went on to say:

The work does not attempt a musical expression of works of Whitman; no poem or incident of his verse is in mind.

It is not, strictly speaking, a 'jazz' symphony, says the composer, as an approach to the jazz idiom is made only in the finale.

The idea is distinctly interesting, and the work succeeds in suggesting an American atmosphere, while Mr. De Lamarter handles his work with distinct skill. But despite his effective orchestration, the ingredients of the work did not seem sufficiently fused to give the impression of a symphony. It seemed, rather, a suite, a succession of tunes. Mr. De Lamarter's own musical individuality was overshadowed, it appeared, by the individuality

¹²² F. D. Perkins, "Philharmonic Offers Two Premieres of American Music," *New York Herald Tribune*, 22 August 1926.

¹²³ The work was conducted by Frederick Stock.

of the songs he used, despite his skill in their use. The work had considerable applause, although there was a certain impression of reserve in its reception.¹²⁴

De Lamarter had only one additional work performed at the Stadium. His Concerto for Organ and Orchestra in E Major was played on 27 June 1956. Clare Coci was the soloist and William Strickland was the conductor. Although his *Whitman Symphony* was marked by good intentions, it remained for someone else to take similar ideas (and methods) and create lasting musical concert pieces with them.

During the three summers that followed, more American creations were featured at the Stadium, several of which were conducted by Stock. On 29 July 1927, Charles Skilton's Suite, *Primeval*, a collection of pieces that describes in musical tones the lives of various Native Americans, was heard. The first movement is "Sunrise Song" (Winnebago) while the third movement, "Flute Serenade" featuring a large wooden flute, depicts the Sioux tribe. The *New York Telegram* critic applauded Skilton's "research" into Indian melodies and declared, "The piece is light, and for the most part, convincing. If heard again and again, no doubt the melodies would grow upon the listener, and, finally blend themselves into a composite whole worthy of another rendition at the Stadium."¹²⁵ Two days later, Stock led the Philharmonic in the *American Negro Suite* by Danish-born American composer, Thorwald Otterstrom. The work consists of seven straightforward orchestrations of Black American and Native American melodies. *The New York Times* critic felt that the suite, "while not of outstanding musical importance, is full of color, pathos, and humor. It had a cordial reception from the audience."¹²⁶

Also in 1927, Frederick Shepherd Converse's *Flivver Ten Million: A Joyous Epic; Fantasy for Orchestra*, recently premiered in Boston, was greeted with much fanfare, including a flurry of newspaper articles leading up to the first New York performance at the Stadium. Converse's riotous piece, with its wind machines, anvils, and car horns, described in musical tones the life of a Ford car from its creation in the factory to its recovery from a collision.¹²⁷ It also inspired comparison with Honegger's *Pacific 231* to which, according to the critics, it owed a bit of a debt.¹²⁸ This is somewhat debatable; Converse's piece features measures of music depicting the car on the road but otherwise sounds nothing

¹²⁴124 Francis D. Perkins, "After Walt Whitman' Played at Stadium, Has Real Jazz In It," *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 August 1926.

¹²⁵ *New York Telegram*, "A Stadium 'First,'" 31 July 1927.

¹²⁶ *The New York Times*, "Novelty At The Stadium," 2 August 1923.

¹²⁷ *The New York Times*, "Ford Invited to Hear 'Flivver Ten Million,'" 11 July 1927.

¹²⁸ Richard L. Stokes, "Realm of Music," *The Evening World*, 16 July 1927.

like Honegger's work. The publicity reached an amusing climax in a photo that appeared in the 24 July 1927 issue of *The New York Times* showing Van Hoogstraten behind the wheel of a Ford with Philharmonic musicians surrounding the car while holding their instruments. The extra attention notwithstanding, Converse's piece met with a mixture of amusement and respect, the audience laughing at some of the more obvious moments of sound effects, while the critics were divided, at least one of them recognizing the relative lightness of the work beneath the modernistic surface.

An additional work in a similar mode performed in 1927 was James P. Dunn's *We*, written in honor of Charles A. Lindbergh's historic trans-Atlantic flight, which took place in May of that same year. The Stadium performance took place on 27 August 1927 under the direction of Van Hoogstraten. This composition featured a part for fire-engine siren, large percussion forces, as well as such quotations as "Dixie," "The Star-Spangled Banner," the "Marseillaise," and "Yankee Doodle."¹²⁹ Despite hoopla similar to that which greeted Converse's *Flivver Ten Million*, the work failed to impress the critics. As Perkins wrote, "the music gave an impression of derivativeness, with the source of the derivation Richard Strauss. It had a strong flavor of that master but told comparatively little about the musical individuality of Mr. Dunn."¹³⁰

Opening night of 1928 included the New York premiere of John Alden Carpenter's *Skyscrapers*, another jazz-inspired piece with fantastic orchestration that has failed to hold in the repertoire (the work frequently quotes the Spanish folk song, "La Cucaracha," among other things).¹³¹ A little more than a year later, Stadium audiences heard a mammoth work, *America* for chorus and orchestra by Swiss-born American composer Ernest Bloch. A three-movement symphony, *America* won for the immigrant composer a \$3,000 prize from *Musical America*. The first movement, "1620," portrays in neo-romantic tones the native Americans and the arrival of the pilgrims. The second, "1861-1865," is about the Civil War, of course, and is part turmoil and part lament. The finale, "1926" is a breezy and boisterous portrait of America in the then-present, replete with car horns and jazzy nervous energy. Quotations from such Stephen Foster songs as "Old Folks at Home," folk tunes, and patriotic tunes—"Yankee Doodle" among them—appear throughout the work, which also concludes

¹²⁹ *New York Post*, "At the Stadium Tonight," 26 August 1927.

¹³⁰ Francis D. Perkins, "'We' Gets First Performance at Stadium Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, 28 August 1927.

¹³¹ *New York American*, "3,000 On Hand As Stadium Concert Season Is Opened," 6 July 1928: "The score is colorful and brilliant, striking the modern idiom and portraying the mechanical era with a soundness and sincerity that won long plaudits from the audience. Red and green signal lights erected atop the platform added color to the spectacle."

with a recently-written patriotic anthem to be sung by the audience as well as by the chorus. Bloch had hoped that the newly written anthem would replace “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which even then had not been formally adopted as the national anthem (it was in 1931).¹³² The latter, if not significantly more distinguished than the former, eventually won out, of course. The Stadium performance was its sixth in the New York area and, apparently, the audience was disinclined to join in, at least at the Stadium. Perkins described the so-called “epic rhapsody” as “the most ponderous and important orchestral work produced in this country in several years; a work of remarkable craftsmanship, of genius at least at times, with an earnestness and eloquence reflecting the idealistic devotion of the composer for his adopted country.”¹³³ *America* was led by Van Hoogstraten and was preceded by Dvorak’s Ninth Symphony, “From the New World.”

At Lewisohn Stadium in the 1920s, American music was reasonably plentiful, its composers, critics, and audience hungry for creations of stature that would rank with the best of Europe. Some creations were hopelessly derivative of European masters, as was obvious to the critics and, as reviews suggest, even to the audience on occasion. Others were awkward attempts at combining popular idioms with mainstream classical music. Several works were perhaps too topical to have enduring value. And then there were those compositions with greater intentions than merits. But Lewisohn Stadium did, ultimately, discover and nurture genius in the form of a native-born American composer who succeeded in creating a small group of enduring classical compositions characterized by a distinctly American accent. And it did not have to go very far to find that composer, born and raised as he was in the Stadium’s backyard.

George Gershwin

Born in 1898 to Russian-Jewish parents in Brooklyn, and raised on the Lower East Side, George Gershwin (*née* Jacob Gershvin) studied piano at an early age and later studied theory, harmony, counterpoint and orchestration with a succession of teachers. The teachers included Rubin Goldmark, who served as Minnie Guggenheimer’s composition teacher for a brief time,¹³⁴ and American maverick composer Henry Cowell, who was famed for his tone cluster piano pieces. Another teacher was Joseph Schillinger, whose mathematical approach

¹³² Leta E. Miller, *Music and Politics in San Francisco: From the 1906 Quake to the Second World War* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 120-22.

¹³³ Francis D. Perkins, “Stadium Hears Two Familiar Music Offerings,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 July 1929.

¹³⁴ Guggenheimer and Williamson, *Mother Is Minnie*, 71.

to composition (which emphasized rhythm and sound) may have inspired Gershwin to write such later works as the percussion-laden *Cuban Overture*.¹³⁵ Gershwin also approached many of the world's finest composers and/or composition teachers, including Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, and Nadia Boulanger, only to be politely turned down. As has often been told, many of them felt that Gershwin was already a great composer and did not want to tamper with his success.

In 1914, Gershwin left school to work as a pianist and song-plugger in Tin Pan Alley. After some early songs and a musical, *La La Lucille* (1919), he achieved his first great success as a song-writer in 1919 with "Swanee," made famous by a best-selling recording featuring Al Jolson as vocalist. From that point on, Gershwin enjoyed rapid fame as a composer of musicals for Broadway and London, achieving particular renown with 1931's *Of Thee I Sing*, the first musical ever to win a Pulitzer Prize. Gershwin later relocated to Hollywood, where he composed for movie musicals and, among other things, played tennis with Arnold Schoenberg.¹³⁶

Concurrent with his Broadway career, Gershwin developed an ambition to become a classical composer. Following several impressive early works, *Lullaby for String Quartet* (1919) and a 1922 one-act opera, *Blue Monday*, later retitled *135th Street*, Gershwin's first successful attempt at merging American popular music with the classical idiom came in 1924 with his *Rhapsody in Blue* for piano and orchestra.¹³⁷ This work was premiered on 12 February in Aeolian Hall, New York, by Paul Whiteman and his orchestra with Gershwin at the piano. The concert was entitled "An Experiment in Modern Music." With this now-legendary concert, Whiteman attempted to help create a distinctive voice for American music as well as to achieve personal renown, hoping to be viewed as more than a band-leader. On the program were such works as Victor Herbert's *Suite of Serenades* and a medley of songs by Irving Berlin. But most evidence supports the long-held belief that Gershwin's *Rhapsody* stole the show, which attracted a large audience that included too many luminaries to mention. Among them were Leopold Stokowski, Walter Damrosch, Sergei Rachmaninov, and Fritz Kreisler, all destined to become Gershwin supporters. While most of the audience was enraptured by the Gershwin, the critics opinions were mixed.

¹³⁵ Jablonski, *Gershwin*, 231-33.

¹³⁶ Richard Crawford, Wayne J. Schneider, and Norbert Carnovale, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, s.v. "George Gershwin." London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001.

¹³⁷ The work was orchestrated by Ferde Grofé; Gershwin claimed full orchestration credit for his subsequent orchestral works, although the truth of this claim remains the subject of debate.

Mixed-to-negative reviews greeted most of Gershwin's efforts, in or out of the Stadium.¹³⁸

Despite this less-than-glowing reception, Gershwin, like most composers whose works failed to impress the critics, remained intent on concert hall success anyway, producing two more classical orchestral works in the 1920s: Concerto in F (1925) and an orchestral work, *An American in Paris* (1928). Both were premiered in Carnegie Hall by the New York Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Damrosch. Gershwin again played the piano for his Concerto. On both occasions, the critics were again divided. A number of them were unsure as to whether these works were "pure jazz" or classical. The Concerto is in three movements and combines loose treatments of the sonata allegro form in the outer movements with jazz and blues themes in all three, most notably in the extended trumpet solo in the slow second movement. The final movement skillfully repeats and resolves themes from the first two. *An American in Paris* is a Straussian symphonic poem with blues themes as well as a touch or two of Debussyan impressionism, notably in the slow interlude in the middle of the piece that features a celesta.

While the Stadium Concerts did not launch Gershwin's major orchestral works of the 1920s, an argument can be made that they did much to solidify their still-strong places in the standard concert repertoire. For this, perhaps the Stadium management, led by Minnie Guggenheimer,¹³⁹ and Stadium audiences deserve more of the credit than the critics, most of the former able to hear greatness where at least some of the critics heard awkwardness. It should be mentioned that the Philharmonic musicians, made up mostly of Europeans, did not particularly care for Gershwin or his music and rarely performed him at subscription concerts during his lifetime. When they did take on his music, they did so with little feeling for its jazz idiom.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the Stadium management gave the stage to Gershwin; the audiences (the 1929 crowds in particular) turned out in record numbers.

During the decade, three Stadium concerts featured music by Gershwin. The 25 July 1927 concert featured the first Stadium performances of *Rhapsody in Blue* and the Concerto in F, with Van Hoogstraten conducting and the composer as soloist. Two summers later, on 9 July 1929, Van Hoogstraten conducted the

¹³⁸ Jablonski, *Gershwin*, 61-76.

¹³⁹ Untermyer and Williamson, *Mother is Minnie*, 16. Untermyer states that her mother talked a "shy" Gershwin into playing *Rhapsody in Blue* at the Stadium in 1927. If so, this may have been one of Minnie Guggenheimer's greatest decisions as chairwoman of the Stadium Concerts.

¹⁴⁰ Pollack, *Gershwin*, 124. Gershwin did not help his case by wearing a derby hat and smoking cigars during rehearsals.

Stadium premiere of *An American in Paris*. On 26 August of that same summer, Stadium audiences were treated to a second performance of *An American in Paris*, this time conducted by the composer himself. Heard on the same program was *Rhapsody in Blue*, with Van Hoogstraten conducting and Gershwin as soloist. Gershwin's baton-leading may have been an attempt on his part to conduct his music better than did Van Hoogstraten.¹⁴¹

The 1927 concert inspired raves from such critics as Charles Pike Sawyer of the *Evening Post*, who considered the Concerto an improvement over the *Rhapsody*.¹⁴² The *Daily Telegram* acknowledged the growing popularity of "modern jazz in the Gershwin manner," noting the large attendance that surpassed the 15,000 music lovers who heard Beethoven's Ninth a week earlier and expressing the hope for another Gershwin night in the near future.¹⁴³ But *The New York Times* wrote of the *Concerto*:

There was no doubt of the favor with which it [the *Concerto*] was received on that occasion by the major part of the audience, although critical opinion in many quarters made reservations as to its lack of technical resource, a certain dryness in its use of musical ideas, and the generally self-conscious manner in which the young composer utilized the popular rhythms of the day in the development of his themes.¹⁴⁴

The same review noted, with perhaps a trace of condescension, that the *Rhapsody*, "in its idiom and manner has a far greater appeal to the popular taste than has the concerto."¹⁴⁵ Finally, Charles H. Noble of the *Herald Tribune* also dismissed the concerto as "a beautifully dressed weak sister of the rhapsody to whom the garments of respectability and polite society are far from comfortable." He also found the performance of the concerto "lifeless" and beyond the abilities of the orchestra, but found much to praise in the performance of the *Rhapsody*, a work he correctly predicted "is destined to become an American classic whether jazz re-enters the cabaret or dwells awhile in the drawing room."¹⁴⁶

Whereas 16,000 attended the 1927 Gershwin concert, an estimated audience of 5,000 to 8,000 showed up to hear the Stadium premiere of *An American in Paris*. The small attendance was due in part to the fact that on that day, New York City experienced the hottest weather ever recorded up to that time. Surprisingly, some of the reviews were harsher than those

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 126.

¹⁴² Charles Pike Sawyer, "Gershwin Music by Philharmonic," *Evening Post*, 26 July 1927.

¹⁴³ *Daily Telegram*, "Gershwin at the Stadium," 26 July 1927.

¹⁴⁴ *The New York Times*, "Stadium Throng Gives Gershwin a Welcome," 26 July 1927.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Pollack, *Gershwin*, 125.

for the Concerto, a work which has grown in stature over the years but admittedly has not yet attained the popularity of the other two. Perkins wrote that the piece was “pleasurably amusing” but “leaves a sense of a likable divertissement rather than a major opus.”¹⁴⁷ The *New York World* was even more condemning:

Mr. Gershwin’s rather erratic episodes are not freighted with too much invention. To quote James P. Dunne [*sic*], who sat beside me, Mr. Gershwin ‘has made the most gorgeous mistakes in orchestration.’ The result is deft, if prosaic vulgarity, a gaucherie unrelieved by exotic fancies or the saving grace of irony. Of course, Mr. Gershwin has affronted all tenets of modernism by yielding to the urge of melody. Yet his melodies are unlovely and become more so by undisguised repetition.¹⁴⁸

But by the end of the summer of 1929, amidst further scathing reviews by a few critics, at least some of them had to concede that Gershwin had won the day. The second Gershwin concert of the summer attracted enormous crowds. As Charles D. Isaacson wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*:

Honest George, we take it all back. What we said about your popularity and those other things we wrote when they played your ‘American in Paris’ a few weeks ago at the Lewisohn Stadium. You know, when we declared that the crowds weren’t following you as much as they were, and the ebb of the tide — Absolutely George, we were all wrong. Monday night, we were so sure we weren’t off that we came at the last minute, and sauntering, as if to indicate — oh, there’ll be plenty of seats. You must have had the laugh on us. Sure, you did — when we got there, the Stadium was packed; lines extended up and down the hills to the box-offices. Folks were pleading to get in. They wanted to hear George Gershwin.¹⁴⁹

Not surprisingly, Gershwin received some votes for the 1929 Request Program as well. His piece, along with Franck’s Symphony in D minor, Brahms’s First and Fourth Symphonies, and works by Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams, Prokofiev and other composers, lost to Tchaikovsky’s *Pathétique* Symphony, Wagner’s Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, and Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony.¹⁵⁰ Even so, Gershwin had

¹⁴⁷ Francis D. Perkins, “Gershwin’s New Work Captures Stadium Favor,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 July 1929.

¹⁴⁸ *New York World*, “Music,” 9 July 1929.

¹⁴⁹ Charles D. Isaacson, “Music,” *Daily Telegraph*, 28 August 1929.

¹⁵⁰ *The Evening Sun*, “Stadium Request Program Chosen,” 28 August 1929. Other works by Beethoven, Wagner and Tchaikovsky that did not appear on the program included Beethoven’s “Eroica,” excerpts from the *Ring* cycle, and Tchaikovsky’s Fourth symphony. The writer of this article did not mention which works by Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams, Gershwin, and Prokofiev received votes nor did he mention the numbers of votes for each work chosen.

attracted a considerable popular following in New York. As will be seen, the summer music festivals that came into being soon after the Stadium Concerts took him up to a great extent as well.

Among Gershwin's supporters, despite the composer's rumored misgivings about his conducting, was Van Hoogstraten, who programmed Gershwin's *An American in Paris* in the 8 July 1929 concert. Prior to the 25 July 1927 concert, the Dutch conductor spoke of the *Rhapsody* and Concerto as follows:

Both works are brilliantly orchestrated and possessed of a rhythm that should be even more fascinating in the open air than in a closed auditorium. The animated characteristics of the music, the contagious swing of the rhythms popularly known as the Charleston, will have a tremendous appeal to the outdoor audience, and I am certain Mr. Gershwin's originality and musical skill are amply attested to in these two compositions.¹⁵¹

Van Hoogstraten's comments before the first Gershwin concert at the Stadium were prophetic. The three concerts of the twenties featuring compositions by Gershwin began an artistic relationship that lasted throughout the remainder of the Stadium Concerts.

Soloists

Appearances by concert soloists were limited due to the Stadium's trying acoustics, which remained a problem throughout its existence. In the twenties, the concerts often relied on local conductors' spouses, including Hadley's wife, soprano Inez Barbour, and van Hoogstraten's wife, Elly Ney, and orchestra members, such as concertmaster Hans Lange and principal 'cellist Cornelius Van Vliet, among others, for concertos and vocal works. Most notable were the Stadium competitions involving young talent, one of which produced a future star; the performances towards the end of the decade by the Hall Johnson Negro Choir; and several curiosities. As improvements were made in the miking of the concerts, more soloists from around the world performed at Lewisohn Stadium.

Talent Contests

Talent contests were held every year from 1922 to 1927, when they were abandoned as more prestigious artists began to go to the City College campus. These contests, presided over by an auditions committee chaired by Mrs. William Cowan, involved hundreds of applicants who were judged over a period of two months in May and June. In an interview, Mrs. Guggenheimer

¹⁵¹ *The Evening Telegram*, "Stock for the Stadium," 23 July 1927.

stated, “We hear both vocal and instrumental musicians, averaging twenty to thirty a day.”¹⁵² The competitions took place in Aeolian Hall; in 1924, the top two finalists gave solo recitals during the following winter season. Those two finalists were in fact chosen by the Stadium audiences during the season’s Audition Winners’ Concert. In that concert, which took place on 13 August 1924, the six contest winners performed arias and/or concerto movements while the audience members each filled out their preferences on ballots. The four runners-up received cash prizes of, respectively, \$200, \$150, \$100, and \$50.¹⁵³ One week later, pianist Ignace Hilsberg, who performed the first movement of Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto, and violinist Miron Poliakin, who undertook the first movement of Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto, were announced as the winners. Each performed at Aeolian Hall during the winter season. The other performers were soprano Virginia Rea, who sang “Caro nome” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, baritone Frank Johnson, who offered Elgar’s 1902 patriotic song “Land of Hope and Glory,” violinist Benno Rabinoff, who was scheduled to perform Vieuxtemps’s Fourth Violin Concerto but did not appear, and mezzo-soprano Frances Paperte, who sang “O mio Fernando” from Donizetti’s *La Favorita*.

None of these soloists appeared again at the Stadium and, indeed, most of the contest winners of the twenties did not attain fame. However, at least several Audition Winners achieved some later success. For example, 1923 Audition winner Mischa Mischakoff was appointed to the post of concertmaster of the New York Symphony Orchestra the following year. He later led the string sections of the Philadelphia, Chicago, NBC, and Detroit orchestras, among others, founded the Mischakoff String Quartet, and taught for a number of years at the Juilliard School of Music. But it was the 1925 competition¹⁵⁴ that produced one of the Stadium’s most enduring legacies to the international music scene.

Marian Anderson

¹⁵²152 Jane Dixon, “Mrs. Guggenheimer Tells Why Stadium Concerts Started,” *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 30 July 1924.

¹⁵³ *New York American*, “Unusual Features to Mark the Stadium Concerts for This Week; Six Audition Winners to Appear and Arnold Volpe to Return as Guest Conductor of Philharmonic,” 10 August 1924.

¹⁵⁴ *The Christian Science Monitor*, “Musicianship and Public Performances,” 13 June 1925: The winners of the 1925 competition faced tougher standards, including tests in theory and musicianship, and each performed on separate concerts rather than in one Audition Winners’ Concert. None performed a solo recital at Aeolian Hall or any other venue.

The *New York Herald Tribune* announced on 2 July 1925:

Five of the winners are violinists, with two pianists and one singer – Marian Anderson, a Negro contralto from Philadelphia.

Miss Anderson, the only singer chosen from about 300, has been studying in Philadelphia with Cesare Boghetti. She gave a recital here in Town Hall on April 25, 1924; has been soloist with the Philharmonic Society of Philadelphia and will be the first Negro artist to appear at the Stadium.¹⁵⁵

Mrs. Cowan made it clear from the outset that Anderson's victory had everything to do with her phenomenal talent and transcended issues of skin color. She stated, "The judges consider Miss Anderson's voice the most remarkable organ that ever has been heard in these auditions, and she has been selected for an appearance with the Philharmonic Orchestra for this reason."¹⁵⁶ Some members of the New York media hailed this enlightened act. Grena Bennett wrote in the *New York American*, "This was a rare example of fairness, of real musical ability being justly acclaimed and the prize being properly placed. No Mason and Dixon line or race prejudice hampered the judicial body."¹⁵⁷

For Marian Anderson, winning the contest was a major albeit temporary victory. Born and raised in Philadelphia, the contralto received a great deal of attention in her community, her considerable talents evident at an early age. While she was in high school, a committee was formed to produce benefit concerts at such venues as Philadelphia's Musical Fund Hall for Anderson and money was thus raised to further her musical education.¹⁵⁸ A little later on, her church set up a trust fund for her lessons with several renowned teachers.¹⁵⁹ As mentioned above, the 26 August 1925 Lewisohn Stadium concert was not Anderson's first New York appearance. Earlier, she had performed in New York's Aeolian Hall and several other venues, to little acclaim.

At the Stadium, where she performed "O mio Fernando" from Donizetti's *La Favorita*, three spirituals, and some encores,¹⁶⁰ Anderson was a sensation,

¹⁵⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, "8 Young Musicians Named as Winners in June Auditions," 2 July 1925.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Grena Bennett, "Colored Girl Wins Honors in Vocal Test for Stadium," *New York American*, 12 July 1925.

¹⁵⁸ Lester A. Walton, "Negro Girl Singer Comes Into Her Own," *New York World*, 19 July 1925.

¹⁵⁹ Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 412.

¹⁶⁰ William King accompanied Miss Anderson at the piano for Harry T. Burleigh's *Deep River* and *Hear'n, hear'n* as well as J. R. Johnson's *Song of the Heart*, among other unlisted selections.



Figure 9: The 1925 Stadium Concerts Talent Contest produced a major find in contralto Marian Anderson, here at the Stadium with Leonard Bernstein in 1947.

Courtesy of the Ruth Orkin Photographic Archive. © Ruth Orkin, 1981.

attracting a large audience and receiving a number of favorable notices. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* wrote, “Miss Anderson’s charm of manner, no less than her rich sympathetic voice, won her audience at once and made an encore inevitable. In her second group of Negro songs and spirituals the peculiar sweetness that marks the voice of her race brought her added laurels. Her enunciation is especially commendable and she again and again responded to demands for more numbers.”¹⁶¹ *The Morning Telegraph* concurred, stating, “her voice is not only good, but glorious. Her sympathetic low notes make for splendid tonal variety in comparison with her ringingly clear top register, and the whole effect is one of largeness in vocal equipment and technique.” The same critic expressed the hope that Anderson would become the female Roland Hayes and stated, “there would seem to be room for such a singer on our concert stages.”¹⁶²

However, at least one critic had some reservations. While he described

¹⁶¹ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, “Negro Contralto Sings at Stadium,” 27 August 1927, 8.

¹⁶² *The Morning Telegraph*, “Marian Anderson Heard At Stadium,” 27 August 1927, 2.

Anderson's voice as "the voice in a thousand -- or shall we try ten thousand or hundred thousand," Francis Perkins commented:

There seemed a slight hint of roughness in some of her lower notes; a certain pitch in her upper register where there was a little tremolo; one place marked by the harsher timbre which has mostly been banished from her voice, while there seems room for development in interpretation. But, after some further study, Miss Anderson should merit a prominent place among singers in active service; she can make a striking impression now but should not take the plunge into intensive concert work too soon.¹⁶³

Perhaps others shared Perkins's reservations. Despite her success at Lewisohn Stadium, Anderson had to wait several decades before fully winning over American critics and audiences. Her greatest success in the thirties came in Europe. Not until the early forties did Anderson achieve lasting fame in her native country. In fact, she did not appear at the Metropolitan Opera House until January 1955, when, somewhat past her prime, she performed the role of Ulrica in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*.¹⁶⁴ She was the first black female artist ever to sing at the Met.¹⁶⁵ It should be mentioned that Anderson's own reservations about being onstage in an opera, and not racism, were the main reason for her lack of stage experience, although she did sing opera arias in recitals and on disc.¹⁶⁶

Anderson's defining moment may have been her 1939 performance at Washington D.C.'s Lincoln Memorial after her being denied by unenlightened powers-that-were the use of that city's Constitution Hall. Her subsequent Lincoln Memorial recital was given at the behest of then-First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. However, Lewisohn Stadium audiences welcomed her throughout her distinguished career. From her next appearance on 20 July 1940 to her concert of 18 June 1956, Anderson sang six more times at the Stadium, entertaining her considerable audiences with spirituals and opera arias.

Hall Johnson Negro Choir

Marian Anderson was not the only example of the impact of African Americans on the Stadium Concerts of the twenties. An African-American chorus that performed at the Stadium during the twenties greatly pleased the

¹⁶³ Francis D. Perkins, "Negro Contralto Shows Remarkable Voice at Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 August 1925, 10.

¹⁶⁴ Max De Schauensee and Alan Blyth, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Marian Anderson." London: Macmillan, 2001. Anderson was disinclined to perform in operas for most of her career due to lack of stage experience.

¹⁶⁵ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 412.

¹⁶⁶ De Schauensee and Blyth, "Marian Anderson."

critics and Stadium audiences. On 23 July 1928, the Hall Johnson Negro Choir, before a sizable audience, braved the rain in making its Stadium debut. Johnson, a successful violinist and violist who performed in the Negro String Quartet and a number of pit orchestras for Broadway musicals, found his greatest musical outlet leading choirs and arranging Negro folksongs. In 1925, he formed a group of eight singers for this purpose. The choir increased to twenty in time for its first recital. They made their formal debut in February of 1928 at the Pythian Temple and performed at New York's Town Hall the following month. They met with great acclaim and recorded for RCA Victor soon afterwards. During the thirties, Johnson participated in several successful Broadway productions—*The Green Pastures* and his own creation, *Run Little Chillun*—and he and his choir appeared in a number of Hollywood motion pictures. These movies included *Meet John Doe* (1941), *Dimples* (1936), and *St. Louis Blues* (1929). Johnson's numerous arrangements and small collection of original compositions endured in the choral repertoire for many years after.¹⁶⁷

The 1928 Stadium concert was to have featured the choir sandwiched between music by Weber, Dukas, Mozart, and Sibelius performed by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra under Van Hoogstraten. Rain forced the orchestra from the stage following the Dukas, but the choir performed anyway in front of many empty seats. Their repertoire included such standards as "Ride On, Jesus," "Nobody Knows De Trouble I Seen," "Ezekiel Saw De Wheel," and "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," among other spirituals. When the rain stopped, Johnson and the choir performed encores for the hardy souls who remained. They were invited back for the next night's concert, performing in between Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony.

Perkins wrote glowingly of the choir:

It is well trained, keeping always together with notable precision and suffering no estrangement from the pitch in its unaccompanied song. Moreover, the singing is vigorous, colorful, highly emotional, while the essential racial atmosphere it provides is enhanced by the effective choral arrangements of Mr. Johnson. These proved musicianly, but not oversophisticated—they heightened instead of disguised the color of the music.¹⁶⁸

Evidently, audience members and Stadium management shared Perkins's sentiments for the choir was invited back to the Stadium for two engagements in 1929, on 22 and 23 July. The Hall Johnson Negro Choir continued to be popular at the Stadium from then on. They performed at two concerts each summer

¹⁶⁷ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 420-22.

¹⁶⁸ Francis D. Perkins, "Negroes Sing to Empty Seats Despite Rain," *New York Herald Tribune*, 25 July 1928.

from 1930 to 1933, then appeared three more times, in 1938, 1944 and 1946. In every concert, a group of spirituals was heard between classical works performed by the orchestra.

Among the Choir's many fans was Van Hoogstraten. After the 1928 Stadium concert featuring the Choir, he wrote to the Choir's manager, William C. Gassner, "I have received one of the deepest impressions musically that I can ever recall . . . I have hardly ever heard such a direct expression of the source from which art is created."¹⁶⁹ He also thanked the choir for having given him "one of the rare moments when one abandons one's self completely to the sure beauty of art." One cannot help but marvel at how much the Dutchman took to his adopted country and its culture.

Opera

Toward the end of the decade, the Stadium's first attempts at opera in concert form took place. On 30 July 1928, act two of Gounod's *Faust* comprised the first half of the program; the second half was Brahms First Symphony. Albert Coates was the conductor and the soloists were Robert Elwyn (Faust), George F. Houston (Mephistopheles), Natalie Hall (Marguerite), Harold Hanson (Siebel) and Helen Oelheim (Martha). The latter four soloists were active in the American Opera Company, a short-lived troupe that performed in New York from the mid-twenties to the early thirties. The performance attracted an audience of slightly more than half-capacity.¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, this was the beginning of an increasingly stronger programming of opera at the Stadium Concerts.

On 12 August 1929 the second concert opera program was presented. The first half of the concert consisted of excerpts from Bizet's *Carmen*, the second, excerpts from Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. This program also featured soloists from the American Opera Company. Most notable was a young conductor, the Hungarian Eugene Ormandy. After immigrating to the United States, Ormandy had spent some time as concertmaster and associate conductor of the Capitol Theater orchestra and had recently served as Anna Duncan's musical director. Duncan was a ballet dancer whose mother was Isadore Duncan. This performance marked Ormandy's Stadium debut and, as will be discussed later, the Stadium Concerts did much to make his reputation. He was praised by *The Daily Telegraph's* Charles D. Isaacson as "spirited and his own best Exhibit A

¹⁶⁹ Eugene Thamon Simpson, *Hall Johnson: His Life, His Spirit, and His Music* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2008), 9.

¹⁷⁰ *The New York Times*, "Act From Faust Sung At The Stadium," 31 July 1928.



Figure 10: Eugene Ormandy's two Stadium performances in 1930 were a major factor in his rise to prominence in the orchestral world.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-038-28-002). Photo Adrian Siegel.

as a proven musician”¹⁷¹ and by Perkins for directing “a well-coordinated and balanced performance.”¹⁷² The concert was marred somewhat by oppressive heat which caused several fainting spells in the audience and adversely affected the singing by soprano Natalie Hall, who performed the role of Nedda in *Pagliacci*. Hall later denied rumors that she had fainted during the intermission.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Charles D. Isaacson, “Music,” *New York Daily Telegraph*, 14 August 1929.

¹⁷² Francis D. Perkins, “2 Opera At Stadium in Concert Form,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 August 1929.

¹⁷³ “8,000 Hear ‘Carmen’ Sung at Stadium,” *The New York Times*, 13 August 1929.

Other Soloists

Other than Marian Anderson, perhaps the most notable soloist who made her debut at the Stadium during the twenties was soprano Helen Traubel, who sang excerpts in the all-Wagner program of 7 August 1925 led by Rudolph Ganz. The twenty-six-year-old St. Louis native made her first New York appearance at the Stadium and met with a favorable critical response. The *Herald Tribune* wrote that Traubel “has excellent vocal material, ample power and range and a clear, carrying quality of tone. There was some vibrato, but that often seems to wait upon outdoor singing. Miss Traubel’s singing of the Liebestod from ‘Tristan’ had, it appeared, a very satisfactory degree of feeling, as much as the effect to attain sufficient volume for the Stadium spaces allowed.”¹⁷⁴ *The Times* added, “Miss Traubel showed a voice of substance and considerable sensuous color, and she coped intelligently with the difficulties of the music and of Wagner’s swirling orchestration.”¹⁷⁵ Traubel made three more appearances at the Stadium and later won considerable acclaim in the opera world and on Broadway.

Finally, the 27 August 1928 concert was a unique affair highlighted by familiar selections by Rachmaninov, Mozart, Saint-Saëns, and Handel performed by Professor Leon Theremin (1896-1993) on his electronic musical instrument, the Theremin, accompanied by the Philharmonic-Symphony and Van Hoogstraten. Theremin stood over his instrument and created musical tones with elaborate hand and arm gestures that drew forth the sounds without actually touching the instrument. The result, nick-named ‘ether music’ by critics and wags, projected well into the outdoor arena. Critics and audience members were guarded in their response. As the *New York American* commented, “Professor Theremin last night at the Lewisohn Stadium showed that ether music had great possibilities in the open air. Though the tone of the instruments was very rich, the music did not blend very well with the accompaniment by the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. An audience of 12,000 liberally applauded Theremin.”¹⁷⁶ This was one of only two Stadium concerts featuring electronic music.¹⁷⁷

As the 1920s came to a close, it was unmistakable that the Stadium Concerts had proven to be financially viable in spite of the low ticket prices, and more importantly, to be successful with audiences. Vast numbers of music lovers had

¹⁷⁴ “Large Audience Hears Ganz’s Wagner Program,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 August 1925.

¹⁷⁵ “Helen Traubel Soloist,” *The New York Times*, 8 August 1925.

¹⁷⁶ “Theremin’s Music Produced in Open,” *New York American*, 28 August 1928.

¹⁷⁷ Louis Biancolli, “Theremin Performer Plays with Symphony Orchestra,” *New York World Telegram*, 14 July 1938: On 13 July 1938 Sibelius’s *The Swan of Tuonela* was performed with a theremin substituting for the prominent English horn part. Lucie Rosen was the soloist.

descended on Lewisohn Stadium to hear well-known symphonies, concertos, and operas, as well as new works by American composers performed by New York's premier orchestra, the Philharmonic Society. Although the acoustics were not ideal, much of the music could still be heard by attentive listeners. As sound systems improved during the decade, some of the early problems became less obvious and audiences increasingly were able to enjoy the performances and soloists. The financial crises of 1930s would challenge the ability of the Stadium Committee to continue offering concerts for the masses. How they met their challenges and how the concerts continued is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Depression Years: 1930-1938

The Great Depression may have adversely affected the running of the Stadium Concerts but not the artistic standards set during the previous decade. Indeed, the citizens of New York City, led from 1934 to 1945 by Mayor Henry Fiorello La Guardia, as well as Guggenheimer and the Stadium Committee, saw to it that the Stadium Concerts proceeded on schedule and that they grew more financially ambitious in their programming. During these nine seasons, several new young conductors earned accolades while Maestro Van Hoogstraten maintained his streak of Stadium seasons, again meeting with mixed-to-negative notices. While the symphonic repertoire was more conventional due to the Depression and the growth of opera performances in the middle of the decade, recent European and American fare had its place in the concerts from time to time. The concerts did not return to pops repertoire, remaining redolent of the winter concert season. More importantly, Gershwin's music continued to exert a firm hold on Stadium audiences as the decade proceeded, culminating in the establishment of the annual all-Gershwin concerts that continued to the end of the Stadium's run.

For better or for worse, opera dominated the Stadium Concerts of the thirties, with several seasons (those of 1934 and 1935) offering weekly, fully-staged performances on Fridays and Saturdays resulting in mixed notices for the singers involved, but praise for the conductor, Alexander Smallens, and some disappointing returns at the box office. These concerns did not stop the Stadium Concerts from staging further opera performances, although the number of such presentations decreased from 1936 on. Following the three opera-rich seasons of 1934, 1935 and 1936, most noteworthy were the 1937 concert performances of abridged Wagner operas led by Fritz Reiner.

Several telling signs of Lewisohn Stadium's artistic success involved dispensing with the soloist contests and the gradual arrival of major talent to perform concertos and arias. Concerts early in the decade showcased at least several new notables while in the middle of the decade established stars went to the City College campus. Meanwhile, the Hall Johnson Negro Choir continued to entertain Stadium audiences, an African-American performer named Paul Robeson made his Stadium debut, and highlights of Gershwin's opera, *Porgy and Bess* were given, further extending the Stadium Concerts' somewhat modest but significant advocacy of African-American talent.

The Great Depression

The Stock Market crash of 1929 had a devastating effect on all avenues of life in America. The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts felt the pain as well. Nonetheless, the concerts went on as scheduled, the public joining with the Stadium Committee in ensuring that great music continued to be heard at low prices. Throughout their existence, the financial maintenance of the Stadium Concerts was largely a community effort led, of course, by Minnie Guggenheimer. Donations from New Yorkers of all walks of life would see to it that the concerts not only went on as scheduled, but were also affordable.

In June of 1931, the *New York American* reported the following:

Tickets for the Stadium concerts remain at the old price of 25 cents to \$1 each. Despite the general depression [sic], the high standard of the concerts will be upheld and the attendance is expected to be as large as ever. Due to the combined efforts of Adolph Lewisohn, honorary chairman of these concerts, Mrs. Guggenheimer, their active chairman, and Arthur Judson, manager of the series, and the group of public-spirited citizens who help to make up the annual deficit, music lovers of the city have once more the opportunity of hearing nightly the best symphonic music within the reach of all.¹

In due course, the 1931 concerts went off without a hitch, attracting large crowds and maintaining high artistic standards.

Still, the pressures of the Depression somewhat hampered New York summer music. Prior to the 1933 season, which also proceeded on schedule, Guggenheimer conceded that “while people are giving they’re not giving as much as they used to. Some people can’t, of course, and others are just using the depression [sic] as an excuse. Still, we have enough to begin, and that’s a good deal.”² She also noted, “Some people have tried to tell me that we ought to drop the concerts this year. But music is the one thing during the depression [sic] that people really want; it’s relaxation for them.”³

Evidently, many New Yorkers agreed. Politicians took note. In 1934, recently-elected New York Mayor Henry Fiorello La Guardia played an active role in raising the necessary funds for the upcoming season. Initially, the cost was estimated at \$25,000.⁴ About one month later, the total grew to twice the amount, possibly to accommodate the summer opera productions.⁵ By 16 May, a

¹ *New York American*, “Music Features At the Stadium Are Announced,” 6 June 1931.

² Martha Dreiblatt, “Music-Money,” *New York Post*, 6 July 1933.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Mayor to Help Stadium Raise \$25,000 Fund,” 9 April 1934.

⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Smallens Gets Stadium Opera Conductorship,” 7 May 1934.



Figure 11: Fiorello La Guardia, mayor of New York City from 1934 to 1945, was an active champion of the Stadium Concerts. He is shown here in attendance at one of the concerts.

Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York (ID: X2010.8.244). © Carl Van Vechten Trust.

total of \$18,000 was raised. On this occasion, the Mayor declared, "The Stadium is a civic institution. It is a source of pleasure to thousands and thousands of people," and promised to look into obtaining the use of Lewisohn Stadium rent free.⁶ Although this did not come to pass, the money came in slowly. By 12 June, \$32,000 had been taken in, with contributions ranging from \$2 to \$5000.⁷ The very next day, an anonymous donor brought the total to \$34,500.⁸

In spite of all the fundraising, the 1934 season began with only \$38,000, \$12,000 short of the goal. On opening night, liberal Republican La Guardia had to contend with radicals chanting various epithets as he addressed the large crowd. As the mayor put it, "Yes, we want more music for New York City, and music for everyone, whether they like us or not! We even want music for those who can't appreciate the good we are doing!"⁹ At least one newspaper, the *New York American*, decried the behavior of the "Reds" in the audience. Stating "Politics had nothing whatsoever to do the occasion," the editorial declared, "It was, purely and simply, an evening of musical festival, when every person present was under a moral obligation to observe the ordinary amenities of decent conduct." The editorialist went on to demand deportations for those who behaved like the Reds.¹⁰

It took virtually the entire season for the \$50,000 guaranty fund to be secured. In the meantime, the 1934 season, the first of two seasons which featured weekly staged operas, proceeded on schedule. As the *Musical Digest* put it, "only that little group, led by Mrs. Charles S. Guggenheimer, will ever know the magnitude of their task."¹¹

The task was summed up several years later in the 21 June 1936 issue of *The New York Times* by H. Howard Taubman. According to Taubman, the average total cost of eight weeks worth of Stadium Concerts was \$185,000 with some seasons varying between higher and lower sums. Taubman briefly listed the salaries of such lesser lights as the Stadium ushers, programs, and box-office men, among many others. The total needed to pay the orchestra members' salaries was \$85,000. As Taubman wrote, "It must be remembered that the union's Summer scale is not the same as that of the Winter. A special rate is fixed for the out-of-door concerts. Otherwise, the deficit would be considerably higher, possibly prohibitive." Interestingly, the total needed for the conductors was only \$8,500. Wrote Taubman, "The men who direct the concerts are

⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Drive Started For Stadium Concert Fund," 16 May 1934.

⁷ *New York World Telegram*, "Stadium Concerts Promise Opera, Met. Stars and Beer," 12 June 1934.

⁸ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Stadium Concert Fund Is Swelled by \$2,500," 13 June 1934.

⁹ *Brooklyn Eagle*, "25-Cent Stadium Razz Fails to Ruffle Mayor," 21 June 1934.

¹⁰ *New York American*, "Deportations Needed," 28 June 1934.

¹¹ *Musical Digest*, "Stadium Victories," 18 August 1934.

apparently willing to limit their earnings for the good of the institution. They are cognizant of the cultural significance of the Stadium. The conductors' rates for fifty-six Winter programs would be many times \$8,500."¹² The practice of paying orchestra musicians notable rates while conductors and soloists agreed to perform for nominal fees continued throughout the Stadium's run. As later Stadium guest conductor André Kostelanetz stated:

The idea was to provide good music to many people at low prices. So Lewisohn Stadium, way uptown at 138th Street and Convent Avenue, was for many years New York's only open-air concert hall. Prices could be kept to a minimum because soloists and conductors accepted nominal amounts instead of their customary fees. (Orchestra members received their regular rates.)¹³

Seemingly, most of the artists involved were happy with this arrangement, seeing the Stadium Concerts as an exercise in "Music for the People." At least one conductor chafed somewhat. Fritz Reiner was often hesitant to return to the City College campus, citing the need for rest following the winter concert season. According to his biographer, Philip Hart, "He would then request a fee that would send Minnie Guggenheimer 'into orbit,' declaring that she would never again invite Reiner."¹⁴ Ultimately, Reiner relented and maintained a happy relationship with Guggenheimer and the Stadium Concerts that lasted for several decades.¹⁵

The La Guardia-led exhortations for Stadium money continued throughout the Thirties, along with the hoots and hollers from leftist audience members. Major musical figures assisted the Mayor in raising money. Among them was Gershwin, who, recalling a sold-out Stadium concert of his music, declared in 1935, "The thought occurred to me then as I looked out over these 18,000 faces, that it is seldom one sees masses of people from all walks of life attending a single musical performance."¹⁶ Time and again, the fund was paid, albeit with a significant deficit, and the Stadium Concerts went on as scheduled. New Yorkers and the performers involved refused to have it any other way. For beyond the inevitable financial concerns of both the Depression and the Stadium Committee was the knowledge that something both beautiful and beneficial to society was at hand. As the *New York Post's* Samuel Chotzinoff wrote in 1938:

¹² H. Howard Taubman, "Stadium Budget," *The New York Times*, 21 June 1936.

¹³ André Kostelanetz in collaboration with Gloria Hammond, *Echoes: Memoirs of André Kostelanetz* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 193.

¹⁴ Philip Hart, *Fritz Reiner: A Biography* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), 118.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Gershwin Makes Appeal For Concerts Fund," 20 June 1935.

I am told that it takes about \$70,000 to underwrite the Stadium concerts, and one may well ask what is \$70,000 when compared with the musical well-being of a metropolis like New York. That paltry sum makes it possible for a sweltering minority to journey each night to a classic amphitheater, built on a height, and dispose itself in varying degrees of comfort to listen to a great orchestra, world-famous soloists and picturesque conductors. Welded spiritually by the insidious might of instrumental and vocal art our Communists, our liberals and our Fascists sit on stone and on wood and feel, for the time being, as one. New Dealers rub shoulders—and souls—with rock-ribbed Republicans as they sink their politics in Debussy's "*La Mer*." There, on a soft night, Mr. Frank Hague may conceivably find himself close to Mr. Norman Thomas, Mr. Hamilton Fish next to Mr. Earl Browder and Mr. Fritz Kuhn alongside of Rabbi Wise.

Is not such momentary reconciliation of opposing philosophies worth \$70,000? I think it is.¹⁷

Major Stadium Concert Conductors

Willem van Hoogstraten

During the course of these nine seasons, Van Hoogstraten's streak of Stadium seasons continued to seventeen, ending at that number in 1938, after which year the Dutch maestro conducted exclusively in Europe.¹⁸ Sadly, while he continued to endear himself to some audience members, Van Hoogstraten met with mostly negative critical notices during this time as well. Meanwhile, the emergence of several younger notables led to shorter Stadium engagements. The poor New York reception combined with the conductor's dislike of recordings to render him an obscure figure in the history of conducting despite his considerable experience in New York and in Europe.

The 1930 season began with an opening concert in which Van Hoogstraten led the audience in applause for the Philharmonic's recent and successful European tour under Toscanini. Then came the music. As the *New York World* put it, "Mr. Van Hoogstraten impressed us as depressingly dry. He seemed to miss much of the impudent cajolery and sweet tenderness so rampant in the Strauss '*Eulenspiegel*,' and his gyrations could make little but heavy going of the Ravel Bolero [*sic*]. Frankly, the bolero bored us, which is sacrilege enough when

¹⁷ Samuel Chotzinoff, "A Trifling Investment In Music and Democracy," *New York Post*, 29 June 1938.

¹⁸ Van Hoogstraten's tenure in Portland ended that year as well; the Portland Symphony was out of business for several seasons afterwards.

one remembers the electric thrill of the Toscanini performance.”¹⁹ *The New York Evening Post* concurred, taking Van Hoogstraten to task for being too tense in Wagner’s Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* and for being uninspired in the *Boléro*, though it found something to praise in the Strauss symphonic poem. Several weeks later, the *New York World* provided another unfavorable comparison between van Hoogstraten and Albert Coates, writing, “Personally, we prefer Mr. Coates as the more satisfactory, although it is easy to understand the appeal which Mr. Hoogstraten may exert toward a certain faction of the average outdoor audience, that group of any audience which is content to forego technical niceties for a gymnastic virility.”²⁰ A little over a month later, the *World’s* Julian Seaman was even harsher: “Mr. Hoogstraten is vigorous, gymnastic and rather indefinite as to beat and nuance. An organ point of hairline precision, a delicate bit of shading or a poised inflection of tone often finds him wanting. The radio listener may not notice these things with the Philharmonic, for it is so excellent a body of musicians that it is forced frequently to disregard Mr. Hoogstraten’s wavings and go its own way.”²¹

Reviews such as these, combined with the favorable notices for several other of his contemporaries, probably account for Van Hoogstraten’s declining role in the Stadium seasons. The same conductor who prevailed over the entire 1923 season led fewer and fewer concerts as the Thirties proceeded, including only five during the summer of 1935. In 1934, the *Daily News’s* Danton Walker, noting that the Stadium Concerts were Van Hoogstraten’s “baby,” wrote as follows:

That his baby should have outgrown him is not his fault. Compared with some conductors who have wielded the stick over these thirteen years—compared even with those recent precocious baton-wielders, Jose Iturbi and Eugene Ormandy—Hoogstraten [*sic*] isn’t a great conductor, nor ever a passably good one. But he has the loyalty and affection of a vast number of Stadiumites, still predominantly youthful, who grew up with him, gained their first knowledge of the classics, soaked up a musical education there. Such loyalty must be deserved.²²

It was probably this “loyalty” more than anything else that preserved the Van Hoogstraten-Stadium connection for seventeen consecutive seasons.

During this decade, the Dutch conductor, ever the activist for the Stadium Concerts, made frequent statements on the rise of “mechanization” in music,

¹⁹ *New York World*, “Van Hoogstraten Leads Listlessly,” 8 July 1930.

²⁰ *New York World*, “Music,” 29 July 1930.

²¹ *New York World*, “Coates’s Conducting Marked By Speeding Up of Tempo,” 3 August 1930.

²² Danton Walker, “Van Hoogstraten Cheered at 13th Stadium Season,” *New York Daily News*, 1 August 1934.

specifically in the forms of radio and recordings. Van Hoogstraten decried such innovations, declaring:

People will no longer play music themselves. Children will no longer learn to play. When you have music ready made and delivered free to the house, why should you bother to make it for yourself. Thus you lose the joy of performing for yourself, which, incidently, leads to a finer understanding.

It is because of these things that I am very glad that the stadium concerts [sic] exist. Through them music goes out to so many people. But I am afraid that even those audiences will decrease because of mechanical things.²³

With many symphony orchestras still maintaining a sometimes tenuous existence to the present day, Van Hoogstraten's comments failed to be prophetic. Nor was his vision of the concert experience taken up: in an essay published in the 2 August 1931 issue of *The New York Times*, Van Hoogstraten proposed live music in which the musicians were concealed. "I realize that many people like to see orchestras and conductors," he wrote, "but the heart of the matter, I believe, is that it steals one's attention from the music. Conductors do not stand on the stage for people to look at, they are there to convey to the men of the orchestra that which the composer had in mind when the music was written, as conceived by the leader. I am much in favor of constructing halls in which the conductor and the orchestra would be entirely unseen by the audience." This is an ironic comment, given that Van Hoogstraten's movements on the podium were seen by some as the chief reason for his popularity among Stadium audiences. Van Hoogstraten went on to state that his opinion of the radio had improved: "I am extremely fond of listening over the radio for the very reason that there is nothing to distract my attention."²⁴ Initially reluctant to embrace the radio, Van Hoogstraten came to see the medium as "a close approximation of the ideal situation. The listener can sit back in his easy chair, light his pipe, and devote his whole attention to the beauty of sound."²⁵ What Van Hoogstraten and a number of other conductors (including Monteux) never came around to enjoying was the studio recording, lacking as it sometimes is in the spontaneity of the live performance. Van Hoogstraten made only a few recordings.

Amidst the pans and the delusions, Van Hoogstraten's repertoire remained more than slightly adventurous, if never reaching the dramatic extent of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. In 1932 and 1933, he conducted American music on the July 4 concerts. Both concerts included George Chadwick's "Jubilee"

²³ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Van Hoogstraten Finds Tempo of Life Hurts Music," 1 September 1930.

²⁴ Willem van Hoogstraten, "When Listening Is Paramount," *The New York Times*, 2 August 1931.

²⁵ *New York American*, "Ideal Music," 17 July 1932.

from the *Symphonic Sketches*; “Love Song” from MacDowell’s Suite No. 2 (“Indian”); Rubin Goldmark’s *A Negro Rhapsody*; and John Phillip Sousa’s *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.

The 1933 concert included “In War-Time” from the MacDowell Suite. At the intermission of the 27 July 1931 concert, Van Hoogstraten received the medal from the Bruckner Society for his fruitless attempts at championing the music of Anton Bruckner.²⁶ Indeed, his programming of Bruckner and Mahler, which continued into the Thirties, showed him to be more perceptive about repertoire than about the concert hall and the concert experience.

At the close of intermission in what turned out to be his final Stadium Concert (20 August 1938), Van Hoogstraten paid tribute to Adolph Lewisohn, to whom he referred as “that charming old gentleman,” for providing the use of the Stadium that bore his name. Like most who were present that night, Van Hoogstraten was unaware that Lewisohn had passed away earlier in the day at the age of 89.²⁷

The man called (not to his face!) “Hoogie” by his admiring Portland Symphony Orchestra musicians returned to Europe following the Oregon orchestra’s demise in 1938 due largely to the Great Depression.²⁸ In his final seasons in the Pacific Northwest, the Dutchman stated that he saw no wars on the horizon despite his admission that the Nazi party “leaned towards old militarism.” He also expressed the belief that “it is the young people who belong to the Hitler party . . . and the younger ones should try to [lead].” Information about Van Hoogstraten’s first nine years after his final Portland and Stadium concerts is difficult to access; he became music director of the Stuttgart Philharmonic in 1949.²⁹ We may never know whether or not he left America disillusioned with the country in which he tried to build a career nor if he was a Nazi.³⁰ We do know that his ex-wife, Elly Ney, was called by some during the Adolph Hitler years “the Führer’s pianist” and that Hitler bestowed on her the title of Professor in 1937, ten years after the divorce.³¹

²⁶ *The New York Times*, “Van Hoogstraten Ends Tenth Stadium Season,” 28 July 1931.

²⁷ *The New York Times*, “Adolph Lewisohn Dies At Age of 89,” 21 August 1938.

²⁸ Susan G. Butriulle, “Part III: Willem Van Hoogstraten: Man of Elegance and Style,” in *Oregon Symphony, The First Century 1896-1996* [James DePriest Music Director & Conductor] by Oregon Symphony (Oregon Symphony, 1985), 13.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Albert Coates and Fritz Reiner

Among the many conductors who graced the Stadium stage from 1930 to 1938 were two conductors who had achieved Stadium success during the prior decade. A favorite from the previous decade, Albert Coates conducted three weeks of concerts in both 1930 and 1931, then concluded his Stadium legacy by leading for four weeks in 1932. Coates balanced Wagner and other established fare with Gershwin's *An American in Paris* (30 August 1931) and other American composers. He also programmed such works as Scriabin's *Third Symphony* (28 July 1930) and *Poem of Ecstasy* (17 August 1930); Prokofiev's *March, Scherzo, and Card Scene* from *The Love of Three Oranges* (1 August 1930); Elgar's "*Enigma*" *Variations* (10 August 1930); Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* (20 August 1931); and his own music, including his *Launcelot Symphony* (8 August 1930). Positive notices continued to come his way despite some political intrigue. During this time, Coates also conducted many concerts in the Soviet Union. On 23 June 1932, Coates won praise from the *Moscow News* for his programming Miaskovsky and Shostakovich at a 1 June concert in the Bolshoi Theater.³² This concert was a major factor in Coates's having been appointed by the Soviet Government director of all orchestral activity in Russia, "a duty," according to *The New York Times*, "which among other things involves two trips a year to all the musical units of the country, even the most remote, as well as direct supervision of the chief orchestras."³³ Returning to America with that feather in his cap, Coates was greeted with cries of "Three Cheers for Albert Coates and the Soviet Union!" from some of the Stadium faithful. Coates politely acknowledged the cries before settling into a concert of the Franck *Symphony in D minor*, Vaughan Williams's *Overture to The Wasps*, Strauss's *Don Juan*, and Borodin's "Polovtsian Dances" from *Prince Igor*.³⁴ Several days later, Coates waxed eloquently on the state of the Soviet musical world in a series of newspaper articles, praising a number of the young composers, such as Shostakovich, and even noting that women musicians have greater opportunities for careers in music in the Soviet Union than in other lands.³⁵ Of course, in praising the Soviet Union, Coates was being wise not to bite the hand that fed him.

His Soviet ties notwithstanding, Coates remained enthusiastic about new American music. In 1930, he conducted music by *The Lincoln Imp* by W. H. Reed

³² *New York Morning Telegraph*, "Stadium Concerts Conductors Win Honors," 23 June 1932.

³³ *The New York Times*, "Coates Initiates His Stadium Series," 27 July 1932.

³⁴ Henry Beckett, "Soviet Supporters Cheer Albert Coates as He Begins Concert Series at Stadium," *New York Post*, 27 July 1932.

³⁵ George Britt, "Soviet Inspires Love of Music, Coates Asserts," *New York World Telegram*, 20 July 1932.

(29 July), and Ernest Schelling's *A Victory Ball* (3 August). In 1931, he conducted *Aesop's Fables*, another work by Reed (13 and 20 August). On 16 August of the following year, Coates shared the podium with Gershwin's musical advisor and arranger William Daly at the historic first all-Gershwin concert at the Stadium. So enthusiastic was Coates for Gershwin's music that, when asked to list who he considered the fifty greatest composers of all time, he included Gershwin, praising in particular his Concerto in F.³⁶

Another Stadium conductor from the Roaring Twenties was Fritz Reiner, who conducted for a fortnight in 1931, then led a number of concerts in 1937. The latter concerts included abridged Wagner operas (see pp. 126-27). His opening concert in 1931 elicited mixed reviews—praise from the *New York World Telegram*,³⁷ but damning words from the *Brooklyn Eagle*'s Edward Cushing. Cushing wrote: "for a musician to lack penetration, imagination, taste—this in itself is a sad enough thing for him."³⁸ This less-than-auspicious start notwithstanding, Reiner found favor more often than not. His repertoire was non-adventurous for the most part, with some forays into recent French and Russian repertoire: Debussy's *La Mer* and Ravel's *Boléro* both on 29 July; and excerpts from Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* (31 July). Reiner was slated, along with Deems Taylor, William Daly, and Allan L. Langley, to conduct at an all-American concert on 10 August 1932, which included Hadley's *In Bohemia*; Taylor's suite, *Though the Looking Glass*; Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*; Bennett's *March for Two Pianos and Orchestra*; Chadwick's "Jubilee" and "Noel" from *Symphonic Sketches*; and Langley's *Waltz*, but rain forced the concert to be postponed until after Reiner's departure from America. The same concert featured a young Oscar Levant in his Stadium debut, who joined the composer Robert Russell Bennett in his two piano March.

Eugene Ormandy, José Iturbi, and Alexander Smallens

Two notable young talents appeared at the Stadium during the 1930s, as did a baton-wielder who maintained ties with the Stadium for the better part of its run.

After making his Stadium debut in 1929 leading the American Opera Company in excerpts from *Faust* and *Carmen*, Eugene Ormandy made his Stadium Concerts symphonic debut in 1930, accompanying dancer Anna

³⁶ *New York Evening Post*, "Coates Selects 'Best in Music'; Lists 50 Composers of All Time," 4 August 1930.

³⁷ *New York World Telegram*, "Fritz Reiner Takes Podium at Stadium," 29 July 1931.

³⁸ Edward Cushing, "Music of the Day," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 29 July 1931.



Figure 12: José Iturbi was a highly popular conductor and pianist at Lewisohn Stadium in the 1930's.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-061-20-002).

Duncan in a wide-ranging program of music which began with Dvořák's "New World" Symphony. In *Mother Is Minnie*, Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer quoted a somewhat cool New York World review of the performance. In that critic's words, Ormandy's "technique, sharp and incisive and peculiarly toneless, is better suited to the theater."³⁹ But Cushing, finding Ormandy's podium work more impressive than Duncan's dancing, was glowing in his response. "It was," he wrote:

a pleasure to watch Mr. Ormandy efficiently at work over his orchestra, supremely confident, supremely in command. Greater executive competence few conductors could show—and if executive authority were the sole essential to greatness as a conductor, Mr. Ormandy might hope to rival Mr. Toscanini. The scores, untouched on the desk before him, were evidently photographed in his memory, for his always clean and incisive beat took account of their most minute details. Mr. Ormandy failed not to cue every entrance, to take into account every *ritardando* and *accelerando*, *diminuendo* and *crescendo* and *sforzando*. Doubtless such solicitous efficiency on his part is a matter of habit—of habit resulting from the necessity of working with the orchestras of the cinema theaters and the radio. Last evening it did much to insure excellent performances on the preparation of which very little time had been spent.⁴⁰

Evidently, enough listeners sided with Cushing to make a difference. Ormandy, like most of the early Stadium conductors an Arthur Judson protégé, was appointed music director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1931. After five productive seasons in Minneapolis, he began a forty-four-year commitment with the Philadelphia Orchestra during which time he combined a mostly unadventurous approach to repertoire with a lush, unique, string-dominated approach to orchestra sound that resulted in mixed notices. For despite the frequent beauty of the orchestral playing, many found Ormandy's interpretations to be slick and straightforward. Ormandy returned to Lewisohn Stadium in 1934, conducting ten concerts, during which the young Hungarian mostly eschewed American music, turning to somewhat recent works from abroad: Ravel's *Albarado del Gracioso* (17 July), and the second Suite from *Daphnis and Chloé* (8 July), Stravinsky's Suite from *The Firebird* (19 July), and Sibelius's Symphony No. 5 (26 July) when venturing away from the tried-and-true. On 23 July, Ormandy performed Griffes's *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla-Khan*.

Another Judson protégé particularly captivated Stadium audiences of the 1930s. On 25 May 1933, Spanish piano virtuoso José Iturbi made his conducting debut, leading an orchestra made up of 100 musicians at the Teatro Hidalgo in

³⁹ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother Is Minnie*, 90.

⁴⁰ Edward Cushing, "Music of the Day," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 26 August 1930.

Mexico City. The success was such that ten additional Iturbi-led concerts were given in due course. On the strength of those Mexico City concerts, Iturbi was hired to lead the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York that summer at Lewisohn Stadium.⁴¹ A 13 August 1933 Van Hoogstraten concert of Dvorak, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Debussy and Liszt was cancelled and replaced by an Iturbi-led program made up of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* Overture and Prelude to Act I from *Lohengrin*; Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, with Iturbi conducting from the piano; and Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. The concert was well-received by a large Stadium crowd and attracted mostly positive notices from the critics. One critic, however, the *New York Post*'s Henry Beckett, complained of the program's length and took Iturbi to task for being too refined in the concerto.⁴² Such minor quibbling did not detract from the overall reception, and Iturbi was invited to conclude the 1933 season with a 23 August concert of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, Mozart's Piano Concerto, K. 482, and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Rain forced the concert to be moved to the City College Great Hall, but did not dampen another triumphant critical reception for Iturbi, with Beckett joining in the raves.⁴³

The 13 August concert was almost longer; Iturbi had originally planned to play Liszt's First Piano Concerto, then chose Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto. However, the Stadium Committee balked, saying that the *Eroica* was already long enough. Iturbi refused to back down. The Committee then told Iturbi that the Beethoven would not project in the Stadium. The pianist/conductor checked the acoustics. First he played a celesta which happened to be onstage then, as he ran all over the Stadium, had a friend play a few notes. This resulted in a compromise: Iturbi conceded that the acoustics would work against the Liszt but the summer heat worked against the *Emperor* Concerto. He then chose the Third Concerto, stating, "Only Beethoven is worthy to match Beethoven." The Stadium Committee approved.⁴⁴

Those two concerts were enough to earn for Iturbi the responsibility of leading numerous Stadium concerts during the next three seasons, including the lion's share in 1936. However, Iturbi was less supportive of American composers than most of his colleagues, only conducting Spanish and Latin composers on the rare occasions in which he moved away from the standard repertoire and works by living European composers. In a *New York Sun* interview, Iturbi made no secret of his dislike for much modern music: "It is like a very ugly woman who is defiant and

⁴¹ Marina and Victor Ledin (1999). José Iturbi. In *José Iturbi: Mozart* [CD liner notes]. Columbus, Ohio: Ivory Classics CD-70908.

⁴² Henry Beckett, "In the World of Music," *New York Post*, 14 August 1933.

⁴³ Henry Beckett, "In the World of Music," *New York Post*, 24 August 1933.

⁴⁴ Dagmar Uythethofken. *José Iturbi: Life and Piano Technique* (Delft: Eburon, 2013), 34.

puts too much rouge on her face and paint on her mouth and wears gaudy clothes. Like such a woman, it hopes that only the flamboyant trimmings will be noticed and that the ugliness and sterility underneath will be overlooked.”⁴⁵

Iturbi was admired mostly for his straight, elegant, no-nonsense approach to Beethoven and Mozart and his impetuous demeanor on and off the podium. Controversy erupted early in the 1938 season when demonstrators handed out pamphlets stating “Iturbi Is A Fascist!” and attempted to shout down the concert with chants in protest over Iturbi’s alleged support of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. Non-committal on the subject, Iturbi stated afterwards, “I cannot make any comment because the subject is too painful to me, and I know that the American public respects sorrow.”⁴⁶ Despite the successes of the mid-Thirties, Iturbi only made three more appearances at the Stadium following his turbulent 1938 stint, finding success in Hollywood during the decades that followed.⁴⁷ Among the movies he appeared in were *Music for Millions* (1944) with Jimmy Durante and *Anchors Aweigh* (1945) with Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly. Iturbi was also music director of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra from 1935 to 1944.

The last of these five major conductors enjoyed the most lasting of relationships with the Stadium Concerts. Russian-born American conductor Alexander Smallens studied music at the New York Institute of Musical Art and the Paris Conservatoire before serving as assistant conductor of the Boston Opera (1911-14), conductor of the Chicago Opera (1919-23) and the Philadelphia Civic Opera (1924-31). In 1935, Smallens, who grew to enjoy conducting lighter fare as he got older, had the honor of conducting the world premiere of Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* in Boston on 10 October 1935. During the two decades that followed, Smallens, another Judson protégé, was a fixture at both Robin Hood Dell and Lewisohn Stadium.⁴⁸ At the latter locale, he was entrusted the responsibility of leading the annual all-Gershwin concerts from their inception in 1936 until 1960, when ill health brought about his retirement from the podium.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ William King, “To Introduce New Composers,” *The New York Sun*, 6 July 1935.

⁴⁶ Francis Perkins, “Philharmonic Renews Series At the Stadium,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 30 June 1938.

⁴⁷ Iturbi appeared as a conductor in only one of those three concerts: a 17 July 1948 all-Tchaikovsky concert in which he conducted and played the First Piano Concerto. In the other two concerts (4 July 1949 and 3 August 1961), he functioned exclusively as soloist.

⁴⁸ Bernard Jacobson, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd. ed., s.v., “Alexander Smallens.” London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001.

⁴⁹ Ibid.



Figure 13: Alexander Smallens, with two unidentified people, was the closest thing to a Stadium Concerts principal conductor after the departure of Van Hoogstraten

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives
(ID: 800-043-26-001).

Energetic and tireless, Smallens's first responsibilities came in 1934 when he presided over the Stadium's weekly opera performances as well as a select group of symphonic concerts. In that season alone, he undertook forty-one performances in sixty days! In a 4 June 1934 *New York Herald Tribune* article, he spoke of his desire to bring about a less pretentious and "high-brow" approach to opera, believing that opera is "only artistically serious." However, he was against English translations, feeling that "each opera is naturally suited to its native tongue."⁵⁰ In his symphonic concerts, Smallens favored Russian composers of past and present. At home in ballet as well, Smallens also accompanied the Fokine Russian Ballet during their 1935 Stadium engagement and later assisted other dance groups.

⁵⁰ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Smallens Plans To Garb Opera In New Clothes," 4 June 1934.

Figure 14: Antonia Brico, the first female conductor ever to lead the New York Philharmonic and the only woman ever to conduct at Lewisohn Stadium, led the orchestra on 5 July 1938 in a program that included Sibelius's First Symphony.

Courtesy of the Denver Philharmonic. (PD-US-no notice). Courtesy of the Denver Philharmonic. (PD-US-no notice).



Other Conductors

On 25 July 1938, Antonia Brico, the only female conductor ever to preside at Lewisohn Stadium and the first woman to lead the New York Philharmonic, conducted the orchestra in Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture No. 3, Sibelius's First Symphony, Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* and Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*. *The New York Times* wrote of her rendition of Sibelius, "To conduct the Sibelius symphony was in itself a man-size job. Miss Brico proved herself deeply conversant with the score, giving it an interpretation so successful in delineating its wide variety of moods that it brought her one of the most spontaneous and sustained outbursts of approval of the Stadium season."⁵¹ *The Herald Tribune* was somewhat less enthusiastic: "In a sonorous performance of the Sibelius symphony the color and varied expressiveness of the work were generally realized, although care over details sometimes militated against an impression of continuity and momentum." This was Brico's only Stadium appearance.

Among other notable conductors of the era not mentioned up until now were Hans Kindler, who conducted five concerts in 1933, and Vladimir Golschmann, who undertook twelve in 1937. The former was the founder and first music director (1931-1949) of the National Symphony Orchestra. The latter led the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra from 1931 to 1958, to this date the longest tenure of any St. Louis music director. Golschmann maintained a long relationship with Lewisohn Stadium, conducting into the early sixties.

⁵¹ *The New York Times*, "Philharmonic Led By Antonia Brico," 25 July 1938.

During these nine seasons, several lesser-known conductors took the podium. George King Raudenbush, who appeared in five concerts in 1937, was for many years the music director of the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra. Massimo Freccia—a protégé of both Judson and Toscanini—led four concerts in 1938. He briefly held posts in New Orleans, Baltimore, and Havana, Cuba, but spent most of his long career as an international guest conductor.⁵² Alexander Hilsberg—former Philadelphia Orchestra concertmaster and associate conductor⁵³—ascended to the podium on 15 August 1938, conducting Mussorgsky's Prelude to *Khovanshchina* and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, and accompanying Josef Hofmann in the Schumann Piano Concerto.

In addition, a number of composer-conductors appeared onstage to lead the Philharmonic musicians their own compositions. These composer-conductors included George Gershwin, Deems Taylor, Bernard Wagenaar, Paul White, who was assistant conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Ferde Grofé, and Morton Gould. In most cases, the composer-conductor in question simply conducted his composition, then yielded the podium to the major conductor of the evening. Two other such composer-conductors were Philharmonic members, the violist Allan L. Langley and harpist Theodore Cella.

Another Philharmonic musician, associate conductor and assistant concertmaster Hans Lange was not a composer, but frequently traded his violin for a baton, leading orchestra concerts as well as dance concerts. There were four notable dance events during these nine seasons. Dr. Hugo Reisenfeld, a veteran Hollywood film composer,⁵⁴ shared the podium with Coates for the Dmitri Tiomkin/Albertina Rasch American Ballet Shows of 9 to 11 August 1932 (see pp. 105-06). Howard Barlow—Columbia Broadcasting System's Music Director and another Judson protégé⁵⁵—conducted for the Fokine Russian Ballet on 6 and 7 August 1934. Two summers later, Ernst Hoffman—Houston Symphony's Music Director from 1936 to 1947⁵⁶—conducted for the Fokine Russian Ballet on 13-15 August 1934. Henri Elkan—best known as a music publisher—led the Philadelphia Ballet Company in Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* and *Boléro* on 30 and 31

⁵² Daily Telegraph, Massimo Freccia," <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=QTPRGFFLAL2JLQFIQMGSFF4AVCBQWIV0?xml=/news/2004/12/23/db2301.xml&page=3>.

⁵³ www.classicalmusicphiladelphia.com, "Alexander Hilsberg," <http://www.classicalmusicphiladelphia.com/cdstore.htm>.

⁵⁴ Imdb.com, "Hugo Reisenfeld," <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0006252/>.

⁵⁵ Barlow Genealogy, "Howard Barlow (1892-1972) – Radio Pioneer," <http://www.barlowgenealogy.com/FairfieldFamilies/HDB-obit.html>.

⁵⁶ Hubert Roussel, *The Houston Symphony Orchestra 1913-1971* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972). Referenced in Wikipedia.

July 1936. Giuseppe Bamboschek conducted Lewisohn Stadium's first complete and staged opera performances in 1933 (see p. 123).

Two concerts in 1938 had multiple conductors. Sharing the podium with Morton Gould and Van Hoogstraten, were the composer/conductor, Lamar Stringfield, who directed the North Carolina Symphony from 1932 to 1939,⁵⁷ Eugene Plotnikoff, and Hollywood film composer Arthur H. Gutman. They led the Philharmonic orchestra in music by Hadley, Gutman, Saint-Saëns, Gould, Powell, and Thompson on 31 July 1938 (see p. 109). Eleven days later, on 10 August 1938, the Stadium presented an early pops concert. Gould again shared the podium with a number of three other conductors, all active as radio conductors and big-band leaders. Frank Black was a big band leader and occasional conductor of the NBC Orchestra.⁵⁸ Raymond Paige was a big band leader and pops orchestra conductor who for a time (the fifties to 1963) conducted the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra, where Smallens once served for several seasons as well.⁵⁹ Lastly, Mark Warnow was a CBS Radio Conductor along with Barlow;⁶⁰ he was also a big band leader whose Lucky Strike Orchestra frequently accompanied Frank Sinatra.⁶¹ This pops concert marked the only Stadium appearances for all three radio conductors.

Other conductors who performed at the Stadium from 1930 to 1938 were, in alphabetical order, Leon Barzin, William Daly, Eugene Fuerst, Hall Johnson, Paul Kerby, Macklin Marrow, Arnold Volpe, and Paul Whiteman.

Repertoire and Soloists

The symphonic repertoire at Lewisohn Stadium featured fewer novelties during the 1930s with the expensive advent of twice-a-week, fully-staged operas. The advocacy of American composers declined somewhat; native composers were sometimes relegated to semi-annual all-American music programs and heard less often in combination with European standards. However, George Gershwin continued to exert a strong hold on Stadium audiences, his music often performed (with several premieres). Gershwin aside, the symphonic concerts of the Thirties were perhaps less challenging on the listeners' ears than those of the Twenties. But they remained similar to winter fare nonetheless.

⁵⁷ North Carolina Symphony, "History," <http://www.ncsymphony.org/about/index.cfm?subsec=history>.

⁵⁸ Big Bands Database, "Frank Black," <http://nfo.net/usa/b7.html>.

⁵⁹ Andy Rodgers, "Radio City Retrospective," http://www.local802afm.org/publication_entry.cfm?xEntry=99133034.

⁶⁰ Arthur Jackson, "Raymond Scott," <http://www.rfsoc.org.uk/rscott.shtml>.

⁶¹ <http://sinatra-main-event.de/songindex/astimegoesby.html>.

Stadium audiences got their fair share of Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner and the concerts did not retreat to pops programs and light music. Even the programs of jazz-influenced classical music and spirituals were presented in such a way as to imply a bringing about of new American serious music genres; they were not meant to lighten the season.

On 7 June 1930, the *New York Evening Post* summed up the summer events at the City College Campus thusly:

Willem Van Hoogstraten recalls that when he began conducting the Stadium concerts [*sic*] in 1922 he was warned that too many symphonies were undesirable; that audiences must be tempted with sugar-coated programs. He did not believe it and the programs now, given to packed houses, are virtually the same in content as during the winter in Carnegie Hall. During last season twenty-five different symphonies were given in eight weeks.

If the Stadium programs were by some freak chance to revert to the old-fashioned “pops,” the Stadium audience of today would undoubtedly disappear, he thinks. What the audience wants and gets is the standard orchestra repertory—Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Strauss and Wagner, preferred—with a goodly infusion of not too modern modernists. Stravinsky, from his “Sacre du Printemps” to his “Firebird” has always awakened keen interest and New York’s own George Gershwin draws crowded houses with his “American in Paris” and “Rhapsody in Blue.”⁶²

While Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* was not performed at the Stadium again until 1962, the above quote describes the Stadium repertoire of the Thirties accurately.

In 1931, Wagner was again the composer of first choice, with forty-four performances in total. Beethoven finished second with eighteen. Again, some Wagner and Beethoven pieces, such as the former’s Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* and the latter’s Fifth Symphony, were heard more than once during that season. Harold A. Strickland of the *Brooklyn Daily Journal* counted twenty-six novelties among the music heard in 1931, most of them European works of different periods new only to New Yorkers, and none of them, in his opinion, particularly challenging to the listener. Of Albert Coates’s Suite from *The Taming of the Shrew*, he wrote, “If one can picture ‘God Save the King’ sung by an army of Russians, he has visualized the music of the suite.”⁶³

In 1936, the tabulation of music produced similar results, with Wagner leading with twenty-three, followed by Beethoven again with eighteen. But the

⁶² *New York Evening Post*, “Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra Headed for Home to Begin Rehearsals for the Stadium Concerts -- Other News,” 7 June 1930.

⁶³ Harold A. Strickland, “Wagner Still Popular,” *Brooklyn Daily Journal*, 6 September 1931.

list of American composers performed during the summer is a small one: four works by Gershwin, Robert Russell Bennett's *Adagio Eroica* (26 July), Howard Hanson's Suite from *Merry Mount* (19 July), George Templeton Strong's *When Our Last Hour is at Hand* for String Orchestra (25 July), and Paul White's *Five Miniatures* (27 June) and Symphony No. 1 in E minor (25 July). Hanson and White's works were conducted by Iturbi, who was their colleague in Rochester.⁶⁴

Clearly, the seasons from 1930 to 1938 were less modern and American than the eight that preceded them. Philharmonic historian Howard Shanet and other authors blame the profound success at this time of principal conductor Arturo Toscanini. The "cult of personality" that perhaps he more than any other twentieth century maestro inspired extended to his non-adventurous, European repertoire and may have inspired other conductors and orchestras to program accordingly.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the Stadium Concerts did make attempts to broaden its audience's horizons somewhat.

Contemporary and Recent European Music

The Stadium Concerts from 1930 to 1938 showcased Sibelius the symphonist for the first time uptown. On July 10, 1931, the First Symphony received its Stadium premiere in the Great Hall under the direction of Van Hoogstraten as rain forced the participants to go indoors. Perkins wrote:

The first symphony does not represent the maturity of Sibelius's genius in the manner of the still baffling fourth symphony, or the concentrated, reservedly expressive fifth, for instance; it is more diffuse, more obviously romantic, and has passages suggesting the influence of various composers from countries west, south and east of Finland. But yet Sibelius has cast an individual flavor about the work, which offers portents of the more significant works to come, and often is able to ensnare the imagination. In spite of weather hardly favoring ideal orchestral playing, the symphony had a commendable performance, if not one to rival that of the same work by this orchestra last fall under Leopold Stokowski.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *The New York Times*, "Stadium and Goldman Review," 23 August 1936. Hanson was a prolific composer and the Director of the Eastman School of Music from 1924 to 1964, while White was one of Iturbi's assistants with the Rochester Philharmonic.

⁶⁵ Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 272.

⁶⁶ Francis D. Perkins, "Stadium Concert Played In Great Hall During Rain," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 11 July 1931.

Sibelius's First also received favorable reviews from the *New York World-Telegram*⁶⁷ and *The New York Times*,⁶⁸ the former finding more to praise about the orchestra's playing and Van Hoogstraten's conducting than did the other reviews. It was performed an additional twelve times from 1932 to 1947. The Second received its Stadium premiere on 28 June 1936. The work was well-liked by the Stadium audience⁶⁹ and was performed fourteen times between 1938 and 1958. Although the Thirties and Forties were decades in which Sibelius was quite popular, the Stadium Concerts did not embrace his other five symphonies as much as they did the first two, his Violin Concerto (eight Stadium performances) and a number of the tone poems. The Third Symphony received only one hearing (29 June 1941), under Alexander Smallens. Similarly, the Fifth was heard only once, under Eugene Ormandy on 26 July 1934. The Fourth, Sixth and Seventh were shunned.

The 1931 season featured Reiner at his most daring. In addition to an 8 August Stravinsky-Strauss program and the previously-mentioned 10 August all-American concert which had to be postponed due to rain, Reiner led the orchestra in Goldmark's Overture, *In The Spring*, Hadley's Suite, *Streets of Peking*, Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, Kodaly's *Dances of Marosszék*, excerpts from Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, and Ravel's Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis and Chloé* on 31 July.⁷⁰ The Hadley, Kodaly and Ravel works were all Stadium premieres. The *New York Times*⁷¹ found more to praise in the Kodaly than did the *World-Telegram*,⁷² although the latter critic noted that "the audience appeared to enjoy it. *The Times* critic was less-than-kind to the Ravel, finding the Stravinsky superior. Both critics acknowledged the service Reiner and the Stadium provided to new music on this occasion. As the *World-Telegram* critic wrote, "For those with a particular taste for novelties, the program offered at the Lewisohn Stadium last night was a rare treat."⁷³ This latter comment reflects the disappointment some felt regarding the increasing blandness of the Stadium programs.

⁶⁷ *New York World-Telegram*, "Popularity of Sibelius Here Proved by City College Crowd," 11 July 1931.

⁶⁸ *The New York Times*, "Stadium Concert Driven to Hall," 11 July 1931.

⁶⁹ *The New York Times*, "Work By Sibelius Heard At Stadium," 29 June 1936.

⁷⁰ Other Kodaly works performed at the Stadium were his *Dances* from "Galanta" (twice), *Psalmus Hungaricus*, *Variations on a Hungarian Folksong* ("Peacock"), and the Suite from "Hary Janos" (nine times). A complete list of Ravel performances is too extensive to include. It includes such works as *Boléro*, *Alborado del Gracioso*, the Concerto in G Major for Piano and Orchestra, and *Rapsodie Espagnole*, among others.

⁷¹ *The New York Times*, "Reiner Gives Modern Music," 1 August 1931.

⁷² *New York World-Telegram*, "Stadium Hears Modern Music," 1 August 1931.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

As mentioned earlier, Iturbi, when deigning to conduct modern music, preferred Spanish and Latin music to American or European pieces. He led the Philharmonic in several such premieres during the mid-Thirties. On 21 July 1935, in a program that also featured Manuel De Falla's Suite from *El Amor Brujo*, he led the orchestra in the American premiere of fellow Spaniard Manuel Palau Boix's "Labradores" from his orchestral suite *Siluetas*. The unidentified *Herald-Tribune* critic⁷⁴ and Irving Kolodin⁷⁵ found a few things to praise in this work, the latter proclaiming that "there was much to suggest that Boix's is a talent of the first order" but lamenting "an overstressed, poorly-contrived climax". Both noted the work's Spanish flavor and overall conservative structure. The *New York World Telegram*'s Pitts Sanborn minced no words: "It was marked on the program 'first time in America' and might with propriety have been marked also 'last time'".⁷⁶ On 1 July of the following year, Iturbi presented for the first time in America a new work by the Argentine composer José André, a set of three orchestral pieces entitled *Impresiones Porteñas*. The *Times* critic praised "the composer's grasp of orchestral scoring and his sure sense of color effects," but found the work too short for its ideas and somewhat derivative of Stravinsky.⁷⁷ In the *Herald Tribune*, Perkins wrote a similar review noting the audience's positive reception nonetheless.⁷⁸ Neither composer was heard at the Stadium again.

In contrast, the 7 July 1937 concert featured an important addition to the repertoire: Shostakovich's First Symphony received its first Stadium performance under the direction of Alexander Smallens.⁷⁹ The *New York Times* gave the Russian's youthful opus grudging praise:

The work has provoked its heated yeas and nays, but is now safely bestowed in its proper category, or perhaps one should say categories. For in its slow movements (with the possible exception of the interesting trio in the scherzo-like allegro) it is over-ripe Nineteenth-century musical thinking, while the fast movements speak a twentieth-century language. And many accusing fingers have been pointed at its numerous derivations.

All of which loses significance in face of the fact that the work manages to engage and nourish one's interest. An undeniable sincerity of purpose

⁷⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Iturbi Conducts Stadium Debut For Boix Work," 22 July 1935.

⁷⁵ Irving Kolodin, "A New Singer and Some New Music at a Stadium Concert Begin Iturbi's Last Week," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 22 July 1935.

⁷⁶ Pitts Sanborn, "New Singer Makes Debut at Stadium," *New York World Telegram*, 22 July 1935.

⁷⁷ *The New York Times*, "Argentine Music Given At Stadium," 2 July 1936.

⁷⁸ Francis D. Perkins, "Iturbi Conducts Tone Pictures of Buenos Aires," *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 July 1936.

⁷⁹ This was also the first time that a Shostakovich piece was heard at the Stadium; as will be seen later, an earlier attempt to perform his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* failed.

and an impetuous energy have wielded its disparate voices into an impressive unity, if not a truly organic structure.

The symphony was received with enthusiasm, for which Mr. Smallens's sympathetic and knowing direction was in large degree responsible.⁸⁰

The New York Sun critic was more enthusiastic, writing, "For all its modern idiom, it sings, particularly in the richly imaginative third movement."⁸¹ Posterity has concurred. Shostakovich became one of the Stadium's most-often performed contemporary composers. His First Symphony alone received a total of sixteen performances.

Shostakovich continues to be hugely performed today with most of his symphonies, chamber works, and other orchestral pieces firmly established in the standard concert repertoire. It is possible that his music, like Prokofiev's, provides twenty-first century listeners with one of the most satisfactory compromises between composers of the previous century who may have clung too much to tradition, such as Hadley, and those who may have strayed too far from it, such as John Cage and the New York School. That most of his fifteen symphonies contain singable tunes may be a factor as well, however much Shostakovich's use of melody may have been forced on him by Joseph Stalin and the Communist Party. As his biographer Laurel Fay writes, Shostakovich's name has survived in part because:

festerings of dissatisfactions with 'serialism' and the academic musical avant-garde had reached a boiling point. Western performers and audiences were ready and eager to explore and embrace more accessible, more obviously "communicative" music, music not ashamed of its audible links to the traditions of the past.⁸²

Finally, on 11 August 1938, the Stadium presented a most adventurous all-Stravinsky concert. The first half of the concert featured the *Firebird Suite* and *Symphony of Psalms*. The second half was devoted to the raucous *Les Noces*. Smallens conducted the orchestra in the first half and the required pianos and percussion in the second half. Featured was the Art of Musical Russia Chorus. The estimated audience turnout was a relatively small 4,000. *The New York Times* commented, "Last night, one could not help contrasting the bloodlessness and artificiality of the 'Psalms Symphony' with the rude vigor, the turmoil of rhythm and accent and the warm earthy quality of 'Les Noces.' To this

⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, "Stadium Applause Goes To Smallens," 9 July 1937.

⁸¹ *The New York Sun*, "Stadium Concert, 9 July 1937.

⁸² Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 286-87.

listener it seemed that the performers were also aware of those contrasts, for 'Les Noces' was given with a spirit that was lacking in the symphony. However, the entire program was received with cordial interest."⁸³ Perkins felt that the *Symphony of Psalms* was less suited to an outdoor performance than was *Les Noces* which mitigated against the former. He also expressed the thought that "some time may still have to pass before we have a consensus of informed musical opinion" on both works. Neither composition was heard at the Stadium again, though the three Parisian ballets enabled Stravinsky to join Shostakovich among the Stadium's most popular twentieth-century European composers.

American Music

New and recent American music became somewhat marginalized as the decade moved on with the costly advent of fully-staged operas and the disinclination of most of the Stadium conductors to promote American music. Less attention from the press and public greeted American premieres and novelties and most of the music that was performed has failed to hold places in the canon. Perhaps taking a cue from the Stadium success of Gershwin, many of the American compositions presented in the Thirties were marked by the influence of jazz. Indeed, even Russian-British composer-conductor Albert Coates fell under the sway of American popular influences, promising the use of jazz themes in his new opera, *The Hairy Ape*.⁸⁴ Most notable were the handful of all-American concerts that graced the Stadium stage during the course of the decade, some of them taking place on Independence Day.

The 1930 season featured only a handful of American compositions. The 20 August concert included Philharmonic violist Allan L. Langley's *The Song of Youth*.⁸⁵ The 28 August concert involved three major works by Gershwin. Particularly intriguing were two other jazz-influenced creations performed that summer. On 13 July, Van Hoogstraten led the orchestra in Werner Janssen's *New Year's Eve in New York* for jazz band and orchestra. Janssen's piece had already received its New York premiere on 3 December 1929 by the Cleveland Orchestra and its music director Nikolai Sokoloff⁸⁶ and it was also performed during the 1929-30 season by Serge Koussevitsky and the

⁸³ *The New York Times*, "Stravinsky Played By Philharmonic," 12 August 1938.

⁸⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Coates to Write Operatic Score to 'Hairy Ape,'" 26 July 1930.

⁸⁵ Langley, along with Philharmonic harpist Theodore Cella, were Stadium fixtures, their music usually receiving polite applause and mixed notices. The concerts on August 19 and 20 also featured the Hall Johnson Negro Choir, back by popular demand.

⁸⁶ *New York Daily Telegram*, "Lewisohn Stadium Gets Meed Of Jazz," 14 July 1930.

Boston Symphony Orchestra.⁸⁷ At the Stadium, the jazzy symphonic poem, which, like Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, begins with a glissando, met with a tepid reception from the critics and the concertgoers. As the *New York World* put it, "it is rather cheap claptrap. A drop of 'Louise,' we'll say, fallen into a bowl of Strauss, thickened by Wagner and flavored with curdled jazz. The jazz wouldn't earn its salt on Broadway. The score lacks the adroitness and ruthless drama of Ernest Schelling's 'A Victory Ball' and the clever embroidery of Mr. Bloch's 'America.'"⁸⁸

Nearly two months later, on 9 August 1930, Aaron Copland, under the direction of Albert Coates, made his Stadium debut as both composer and performer, playing the solo part to his own Piano Concerto. This thorny composition, written in Copland's early jazz-modernist idiom and featuring echoes of the dance the Charleston in its second and final movement, inspired more excitement than did Janssen's tone poem, drawing some hisses as well as applause.⁸⁹ The critics were somewhat warmer in their reception, with Perkins writing:

Although there is no formal division, the concerto falls into two parts, the first lyric and the second offering the jazz which presumably was a prominent factor in the horror caused among the traditionalists in Symphony Hall. Mr. Copland, indeed, has made his plunge in jazz unabashedly, and writes with rhythmic vigor, color and sometimes acrid harmonic pungency. One drawback to the complete effectiveness of this part of the work is a fairly frequent interruption of the musical line by halting to display certain instrumental effects, these flavorful but rather digressive. Mr. Copland's musical individuality is better displayed in the first part, which has an engaging lyricism, while with a modern investiture, and illustrates well the composer's skill as an orchestrator.⁹⁰

The *New York Times* was less welcoming:

[That] Mr. Copland has much and significant music to give was proved even in this work, which has gone so far afield for its material. In the beginning and closing sections, where he was wisely content to be himself, there was no doubt about his message. Elsewhere the jazz bits and obvious derivations from Debussy betrayed in the former case the premeditated doctrinaire and in the latter his years of study in Paris.⁹¹

With a certain hint of resignation, *The [Bergen] Evening Record* commented, "The playing of Copland's work by the Philharmonic breaks down almost the

⁸⁷ *New York World*, "Music," 14 July 1930.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Francis D. Perkins, "Stadium Hears Aaron Copland's 'Jazz' Concerto," *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 August 1930.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ *The New York Times*, "Copland Concerto Divides Audience," 10 August 1930.

last outpost of the defense against jazz. It has had the stamp of approval put on it. Jazz, like the radio and musical comedy, has forced itself into the musical picture, and popular support will likely keep it there.”⁹²

This latter point is debatable. Other than Gershwin pieces and certain isolated works by others, jazz did not dominate twentieth-century concert music to the extent that some of the New York critical voices in the early decades predicted it would. The American *avant-garde* composers of the post-World War Two period may have had a greater impact on world music than any of the jazz-inspired composers of the twenties and thirties. Such composers included John Cage and Morton Feldman, to mention several. They influenced post-Webernian serialists from Europe, such as Pierre Boulez, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, the Soviet *avant-garde*, many Americans and even those from the Orient, Toru Takemitsu, among them. As for Copland, his jazz-influenced works have failed to captivate music lovers and even future composers like John Adams and John Corigliano to the extent that his later populist creations like *Billy the Kid*, *A Lincoln Portrait*, and *Rodeo* do to this day. The Piano Concerto was not heard again at the Stadium, but the former three compositions joined several other similar Copland creations in becoming summer favorites.

Like that of 1930, the 1931 season offered little American music other than Gershwin. One curio was heard on 22 July 1931: an orchestral transcription by Elizabeth R. Mitchell of Chopin's Polonaise in C sharp minor, op 26, no. 1.⁹³ The wife of a prominent New York banker, Mitchell was the only female composer ever heard at the Stadium during its first three decades and the performance inspired a flurry of articles about her⁹⁴ as well as about amateur musicians, both male and female, in and around the Stadium.⁹⁵ In terms of American music, the 1932 season followed a similar pattern, with one notable exception. From 9 August to 11 August, Lewisohn Stadium presented ambitious evenings of dance with an American theme accompanied by music by Russian-born American composer Dmitri Tiomkin,⁹⁶ husband of Albertina Rasch, whose dance troupe was featured. Stating that their goal was to devise a new and truly American

⁹² Bergen (NJ) *Evening Record*, “Cheers and Hisses,” 11 August 1930.

⁹³ Francis D. Perkins, “Music by Mrs. Mitchell Played on Stadium Bill,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, 23 July 1931: “The transcription proved to be conservative, well schooled and tasteful, sparing in its use of the brass instruments, observing fidelity to the piano score, which was not endowed with a modern, un-Chopinesque orchestral dress.” On 8 July 1941, Lewisohn Stadium presented Mitchell's orchestration of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in D major from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

⁹⁴ Earl Sparling, “Society Women Take Up Music in Secret After Mrs. Mitchell's Score Is Booked,” *New York World Telegram*, 20 July 1931.

⁹⁵ *New York Post*, “Mrs. Mitchell's ‘Chopin’ Reveals New Music Group,” 21 July 1931.

⁹⁶ Tiomkins's compositions for these evenings were orchestrated by others, among them Ferde Grofé and Deems Taylor.

art, Rasch and Tiomkin looked to Broadway for their inspiration, Tiomkin declaring, “We are no longer looking for the European trademark—at least not we of Broadway. The great artist of today will not scorn the musical comedy stage, nor even vaudeville and talking pictures.”⁹⁷

According to the *Herald Tribune*’s Oliver M. Saylor, Rasch and Tiomkin’s was not the first attempt at American ballet: “The record is strewn with failures and near-successes.” After stating that earlier failed attempts were made by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, and the Dance Repertory, among others—he did not list the composers or pieces involved—Saylor asked:

If these and others have not yet turned the trick, what encourages Mr. Tiomkin and Mme. Rasch to think they can do it?

In the first place, they count on the fact that Mme. Rasch’s school is an excellent, ever-ready forcing ground for a ballet personnel. Then, too, Mr. Tiomkin is at hand as a prolific composer to devise works to be interpreted. No previous attempt to found an American ballet ever had an “official composer” on its staff. Furthermore, Mr. Tiomkin has believing friends who are potential candidates for the posts of “contributing composers.” Deems Taylor and Ferde Grofé will be represented on the impending first program as orchestrators of two of Mr. Tiomkin’s compositions.⁹⁸

To sum up: the attempt was respectable yet failed to answer the question of what, exactly, constituted “American” art.⁹⁹ The Tiomkin compositions included such titles as *Fiesta*, *Cakewalk*, and *Negro Chant*, among several others. The *Post* particularly singled out *Fiesta* on purely musical grounds.¹⁰⁰ These evenings represented the only Rasch-Tiomkin collaborations at the Stadium.

In terms of advocacy of American music, the 1933 season was notable for the concerts conducted by young Belgian-born American conductor Leon Barzin, who included at least one American composition in four of his five concerts. He led the orchestra in Philip James’s *Overture in Olden Style on French Noels* (20 July), Deems Taylor’s ever-popular *Through the Looking Glass* (21 July), Robert Braine’s *J. O. J.* (21 July), Bernard Wagenaar’s *Divertimento* (23 July), and Nicolai Berezowsky’s *Fantasy for Two Pianos and Orchestra* (26 July) during this, his only stint at the Stadium.

Other than these isolated events of American music on European-dominated programs, Lewisohn Stadium featured a select number of all-American concerts in the 1930s. While these concerts failed to enhance the

⁹⁷ *The New York Sun*, “Finds Broadway Invigorates Art,” 21 July 1932.

⁹⁸ Oliver M. Saylor, “Nation’s Ballet Goes to Theater for Birthplace,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 31 July 1932.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Tepsic, 163-70.

¹⁰⁰ *New York Post*, “In the World of Music,” 10 August 1932.

repertoire, beyond the continued promotion of Gershwin in the case of several of them, they did perform a service to the American composer and added to the Stadium's reputation for performances of winter season fare. They also illustrated the belief of the time that jazz and Broadway were the seeds of American classical music.

As usual, the weather continued to prove unpredictable. Fritz Reiner's 10 August 1931 concert was repeatedly postponed until 13 August due to rain.¹⁰¹ It was a telling measure of the Stadium's commitment to American music that the concert was not cancelled outright, although the number of performers involved may have had something to do with it as well. Reiner had to leave America before the concert took place; he was replaced by Philharmonic assistant conductor Hans Lange, who led the orchestra in Hadley's *In Bohemia* and Chadwick's "Jubilee" and "Noel" from his *Symphonic Sketches*. William M. Daly led the orchestra in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, with the composer as soloist, and Robert Russell Bennett's *March for Two Pianos and Orchestra*, with the composer and Oscar Levant as soloists. Deems Taylor conducted his own *Through the Looking Glass Suite* and Allan L. Langley his *Waltz*. Perkins reported that an estimated 10,000 music-lovers attended this foray into these mostly less-than-familiar works.¹⁰² Of the Bennett, Perkins wrote, "There are measures which capture the imagination, but the musical material itself seemed not particularly potent,"¹⁰³ while the *Times* commented "It is not without a certain individuality and is written on a well-conceived plan, although at times its inspiration is halting." *The Times* also had high praise for the Chadwick.¹⁰⁴

An audience of somewhere between 14,000 and 18,000, peppered with royalty from stage and screen,¹⁰⁵ filled the cement seats to watch Paul Whiteman, known in his day as "The King of Jazz,"¹⁰⁶ make his Stadium debut on 4 August 1933. Under his direction, the Philharmonic, augmented by members of Whiteman's own famed jazz orchestra, entertained with jazz-inspired

¹⁰¹ Oscar Levant, "Variations on a Gershwin Theme," in Robert Wyatt and John Andrew Johnson, eds. *The George Gershwin Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11-12: "Each afternoon we dressed and had dinner together only to find the concert again canceled by an evening shower. I almost regretted the arrival of a clear day, for actually playing became an anti-climax to my most active season as a soloist."

¹⁰² Of the works presented, only the Bennett and the Langley were new.

¹⁰³ Francis D. Perkins, "10,000 Applaud All-American List at Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 August 1931.

¹⁰⁴ *The New York Times*, "American Music at Stadium," 14 August 1931.

¹⁰⁵ *The Morning Telegraph*, "Paul Whiteman Night Attracts Society, Stage," 4 August 1933: Luminaries included Mr. and Mrs. Irving Thalberg (Norma Shearer), Jeanette MacDonald, Mr. and Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, George Gershwin, and Irving Berlin, among others.

¹⁰⁶ Carl Johnson, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Paul Whiteman." London: Macmillan, 2001.

classical music. The program featured Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, with the piano soloist Roy Bargy, and *I Got Rhythm*, arranged for piano and orchestra by Joseph Livingston, John W. Green's tone poem, *Night-Club*,¹⁰⁷ the first New York performance of Marc Blitzstein's *Freedom Morning*), Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*, and the world premiere of John Jacob Loeb's *Jazz Bolero*, orchestrated by Whiteman. The concert also featured music by three African American composers: Don Redman's *Chant of the Wind*, William Grant Still's "Land of Superstition," the third movement of *Darkest Africa*, and Duke Ellington's *Mood Indigo*. The concert didn't end until very late in the evening, but was a resounding success with most of the audience, if not with some of the critics. Reservations were expressed by some critics regarding the jazz versions of music from Bizet's *Carmen*¹⁰⁸ and music by Kreisler,¹⁰⁹ also on the program. The *New York Mirror*'s Julian Seaman dismissed most of the music except for the Green and, especially, the Still.¹¹⁰ Several other critics found things to praise in the Grofé. The *Herald Tribune*'s critic wrote that "this composition, though classicists may object to its modern harmonies, nevertheless contains some lovely color music,"¹¹¹ while Pitts Sanborn reported, "The 'Grand Canyon' suite got a tremendous ovation, the section entitled 'On the Trail' more or less stopping the show."¹¹² On the whole, the reviews suggest that while the Stadium crowds craved jazz-inspired classical music and yearned for another musical voice to join Gershwin, the critics, some of whom had yet to embrace even Gershwin, had had enough.

¹⁰⁷ *New York Post*, "And His Concert Debut Tonight Proves That Not All Papas Can Pick Sons' Careers," 4 August 1933. Green, a Broadway and Hollywood composer of such songs as "Body and Soul" and "I'm Yours," entertained notions of becoming a serious composer like Gershwin: "It's my idea to write a couple of swell shows and keep on at what I am doing until I can afford to quit, study hard for a couple of years and then devote myself to serious music. Jazz isn't serious music. I've watched other men trying to write jazz and the other kind of music at the same time, and it can't be done. The tempo is different. The mode of life must be different. Jazz is meant to amuse."

¹⁰⁸ *Brooklyn Eagle*, "Paul Whiteman Conducts Stadium Concert in Modern Program," 5 August 1933.

¹⁰⁹ Julian Seaman, "Music en Masse," *New York Mirror*, 5 August 1933.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. "Mr. Green has remembered Richard Strauss and Igor Stravinsky, and Mendelssohn and Ravel and other standard patterns, and the result is workmanlike, sterile of inspiration, and a bad second to Mr. Werner Janssen's 'New Year's Eve in New York.' Mr. Still's music is less obvious, although his tendencies are unmistakable; but I thought the harmonic texture and tone color far more promising.

Mr. George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, stitched and pasted and otherwise clothed for the market place by Mr. Ferde Grofé, concluded an evening of painful fakery. And yet there is plenty of meritorious music in the world. You will find syncopation in Beethoven and Brahms, dissonance in Chopin."

¹¹¹ *New York Herald Tribune*, "18,000 Cheer Paul Whiteman At the Stadium," 5 August 1933.

¹¹² Pitts Sanborn, "Jazz Proves It Had Grip as Throng Crowds Stadium," *New York World Telegram*, 5 August 1933.

The 4 July 1934 American concert, conducted by Van Hoogstraten, was somewhat less jazz-dominated, even with Robert Russell Bennett's arrangement of music from Jerome Kern's *Show Boat* occupying part of the program. Bennett led the orchestra in his own *Concerto Grosso for Small Dance Band and Orchestra* while Deems Taylor conducted his own *Circus Day*, a tone poem without jazz elements. Critics found the Taylor inspired but too long.¹¹³ Bennett wrote of his Concerto, "[it] speaks in a rather unflattering manner concerning the substance of our theater music" but "there is material in our music for a possible future contribution to art."¹¹⁴ Perkins found something to praise in the Bennett: "The orchestration is deftly wrought. The subject of the work, however, naturally limits the consequence of the musical material. The first movement is rater [*sic*] conglomerate, while the others make their point with able conciseness."¹¹⁵ The *Daily News's* Danton Walker was brief and to the point: "Though practically devoid of musical content, his work is a brilliant and witty musical satire."¹¹⁶ Even when satirized, jazz and classical music, in the eyes of the critics, made uneasy bedfellows.

The 1938 season featured three American smorgasbords. The 4 July concert shied away from jazz and Broadway, Smallens leading the orchestra in Hadley's then-ever-popular *In Bohemia*, Griffes's *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan* and Herbert's *American Fantasy*, the three compositions framed by Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever* and Dvorak's *New World Symphony*. The 31 July concert was somewhat more adventurous. Van Hoogstraten¹¹⁷ shared the podium with Eugene Plotnikoff, Gould, Arthur H. Gutman and Lamar Stringfield in music by five then-living American composers: Hadley's *In Bohemia*, Gutman's Symphony No. 1 in B major, Gould's *American Symphonette* no. 2, John Powell's *Negro Rhapsody* for Piano and Orchestra,¹¹⁸ and two movements from Randall Thompson's Symphony no. 2 in E minor. The concert was sponsored by the Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians and attracted a small audience, which one commentator ascribed to threatening skies.¹¹⁹ Lastly, the 10 August 1938 concert blended show tunes with such works as Debussy's *Rhapsody* for Saxophone and Orchestra and Georges Enesco's *Romanian Rhapsody* no. 1.

¹¹³ *The New York Times*, "Native Program Given At Stadium," 5 July 1934.

¹¹⁴ Francis D. Perkins, "Stadium Hears Musical Satire of 'Tin Pan Alley,'" *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 July 1934.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Danton Walker, "Iturbi Stages A Musical Picnic At The Stadium," *New York Daily News*, 5 July 1934.

¹¹⁷ Van Hoogstraten accompanied violinist Joan Field in Saint-Saens's Third Violin Concerto, the only European work on the program.

¹¹⁸ Milton Kaye was the soloist.

¹¹⁹ *The New York Times*, "An American Bill By Philharmonic," 1 August 1938.

The handful of American-dominated concerts were perhaps perfunctory attempts to Americanize the concert hall undertaken out of duty if not wholeheartedly. But it can be argued that those involved with the Stadium Concerts (critics and some orchestra members excluded) were satisfied with the biggest musical find of the previous decade and were not as intent on finding another. The relationship between that musical find and Lewisohn Stadium flourished considerably during the years 1930 to 1938 and beyond, sparked as it was by triumph and, sadly, tragedy.

George Gershwin

On 28 August 1930, Gershwin played the solo piano in his *Rhapsody in Blue* and his *Concerto in F* and conducted the orchestra in his *An American in Paris*.¹²⁰ The concert attracted one of the season's largest audiences¹²¹ and inspired mixed-to-negative notices. The *New York World's* Julian Seaman wrote thusly:

Conceding that Mr. Gershwin is the darling of Broadway, one must accept him in these days as a decided factor in the development of what we are pleased to call American music, although everyone does not agree that he has a just claim to distinction as yet. Personally, we heard nothing to raise our hopes of a musical giant in the stilted, arid phrases of the concerto in F, or in the somewhat trifling gayeties of *An American in Paris*. Although we dislike the *Rhapsody in Blue* as a piece of music, we freely admit its musical worth and the skill with which Mr. Gershwin has contrived to avoid the banality of his own themes.¹²²

Perkins was somewhat less harsh in his assessment but still guarded in his opinion:

The senior Gershwin work, the *Rhapsody*, remains the most colorful and the most effective in realizing the atmosphere of the best jazz in a non-Broadway musical form. The concerto, a more transitional work, has its interesting features, although the composer is not entirely at home in this form, with which he was dealing for the first time. "*An American in Paris*" remains amusing, but its interest is not consistently maintained.¹²³

Interestingly, the critics were united in praise for Gershwin's conducting effort, the *Daily Telegram* commenting, "[Gershwin] provided a lesson in

¹²⁰ The program also included Weber's *Oberon Overture*, Debussy's *Fêtes* and Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Overture*. Willem van Hoogstraten conducted all but *An American in Paris*.

¹²¹ *The New York Times*, "Gershwin In Triple Role," 29 August 1930.

¹²² Julian Seaman, "Music," *New York World*, 29 August 1930.

¹²³ Francis D. Perkins, "Gershwin in Two Roles During Stadium Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 August 1930.



Figure 15: George Gershwin, the American composer most associated with Lewisohn Stadium.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-015-20-002).

simplicity and modesty of motions to conductors addicted to the trceries of the manual art.”¹²⁴ Among such conductors, the critic no doubt implied, was the acrobatic Van Hoogstraten, whom Seaman took to task for his tepid Weber, and colorless Debussy, among other demerits.¹²⁵

Despite the critics’ misgivings, the Stadium faithful remained devoted to Gershwin and his music. The following season, Gershwin was performed on the earlier-mentioned, rain-delayed all-American concert of early August, while Albert Coates, as dedicated to the cause as Van Hoogstraten, took it upon himself to lead the orchestra in *An American in Paris* on 30 August.

The public demanded more. On 16 August 1932, Gershwin and the Stadium Committee obliged with the first Stadium concert devoted exclusively to one American composer. And not only did the public hear the three major works on which Gershwin had staked his claim, but they were treated to two new serious compositions and a generous helping of Broadway standards. The program began with the overture to the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical, *Of Thee I Sing*. Oscar Levant was the soloist in the Concerto in F as Gershwin felt that the demands of the program on him were too great for him to undertake the concerto.¹²⁶ These first two works were led by William Daly. Coates then took the concert to intermission with *An American in Paris* and *Rhapsody in Blue*, the latter with the composer as soloist. After intermission, the orchestra performed an arrangement of “Wintergreen for President” from *Of Thee I Sing* (Daly conducted), then, with Gershwin again as soloist and Coates conducting, gave the Stadium premiere of the *Second Rhapsody* for piano and orchestra, listed in the program as *Second Rhapsody in Blue*. Following the *Second Rhapsody*, Coates led the orchestra in one of the most significant world premieres in the history of Lewisohn Stadium: *Rumba*, a ten-minute orchestral showpiece later renamed *Cuban Overture*.¹²⁷ The long concert concluded with Daly, Gershwin and the orchestra performing arrangements for piano and orchestra of three standards: “Fascinating Rhythm,” “Liza,” and “I Got Rhythm.”

Music lovers flocked to the City College campus. The *New York American* reported that the concert attracted “the largest crowd yet to attend a concert

¹²⁴ *New York Daily Telegram*, “Stadium Acclaims Gershwin in Jazz,” 29 August 1930.

¹²⁵ Julian Seaman, “Music,” *New York World*, 29 August 1930.

¹²⁶ Levant, “Variations on a Gershwin Theme,” in Wyatt and Johnson, eds. *The George Gershwin Reader*, 11-12.

¹²⁷ Charles Schwartz, *Gershwin: His Life and Music* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1973), 227. The overture’s title was changed before the 1 November 1932 Benefit Concert at the Metropolitan Opera House: “After considering, Gershwin decided that the title *Rhumba* [sic] connoted for the general public a piece for dance band, rather than a work for symphony orchestra.”

at the Lewisohn Stadium.”¹²⁸ Sanborn,¹²⁹ a *Times* critic,¹³⁰ and a *Herald Tribune* critic¹³¹ estimated the turnout at around 17,000, with an additional 4,000 turned away. Of course, one should not take such totals too literally. As Gershwin biographer Charles Schwartz pointed out:

Practically every time Gershwin appeared at Lewisohn Stadium, it was announced that the stadium’s attendance record had been broken. However, it was not always possible to determine exactly how many attended these events. The attendance for the August 26, 1929, concert, for example, has been estimated at anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000. One can only question the validity of these records and wonder whether they were not actually the result of press agency.¹³²

Whatever the actual attendance, Gershwin was in triumph. In a letter to his friend George Pallay, he exulted, “It was, I really believe, the most exciting night I have ever had, first because the Philharmonic Orchestra played an entire program of my music, and second, because the all-time record for the Stadium concerts was broken. I have just gotten the figures: 17,845 people paid to get in and just about 5,000 were at the closed gates trying to fight their way in—unsuccessfully.”¹³³ Oscar Levant reported Gershwin’s reactions to the proceedings as follows:

These Stadium concerts were always singular events in Gershwin’s year. They gave him contact with a larger audience than he ever experienced elsewhere, and it was an inexpressible satisfaction to hear his music played by such an orchestra as the Philharmonic. Owing, perhaps, to his background in the commercial theatre, where audience interest is the criterion of success—hence worth—he was keenly aware of the drawing power of the all-Gershwin programs.¹³⁴

Of course, there was the matter of the critics. By now, however, they presented their opinions with care. As *The Times* critic stated, “In the face of these statistics [the attendance figures], the critical attitude cannot help but be humble. What would it profit us to inveigh against the manifest disproportionateness of singling out Mr. Gershwin as the one American composer to be honored

¹²⁸ *New York American*, “Thousands Applaud Gershwin Program; Many Turned Away,” 17 August, 1932.

¹²⁹ Pitts Sanborn, “Gershwin Sets Mark in Stadium,” *New York World Telegram*, 17 August 1932.

¹³⁰ *The New York Times*, “17,000 Hear Gershwin Program,” 17 August 1932.

¹³¹ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Stadium Filled As 17,000 Hear Gershwin Play,” 17 August 1932.

¹³² Schwartz, *Gershwin: His Life and Music*, 305.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 226-27.

¹³⁴ Levant, “Variations on a Gershwin Theme,” in Wyatt and Johnson, eds. *The George Gershwin Reader*, 11-12.

thus or against Broadway, popularity, the Great God Publicity and other equally elusive matters?"¹³⁵ Nonetheless, the New York critics were rather smug in their evaluations. *Rumba* did not please; as Sanborn put it, "At a single hearing it seemed to be too long and in certain spots to go dull. Revision in the way of condensation and tightening might make it as popular as the Ravel 'Bolero,' which is greatly its inferior in musical body."¹³⁶ However, Sanborn, a Gershwin foe during the previous decade, then added, "The other numbers offered require no comment now. They were all played with splendid zest, and both the performers and the audience seemed to have the swellest of swell times." *The Times* was similarly dour: "Certainly, the second rhapsody showed little progress on Mr. Gershwin's part, and the 'Rhumba,' despite the addition of maracas, gourd, bongo and other Cuban instruments, was merely old Gershwin in recognizable form." Finally, the *Post's* Henry Beckett offered these words of caution:

Again, it must be acknowledged that the measures of Gershwin are in tune with contemporary life — the nervous, hectic, rhythmically infectious life of the city's amusement centers. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" isn't read much nowadays and its influence may be gone, but in its time, it was a factor in the life of the nation and had a great vogue. Thus, while Beethoven may outlast him and have more value in accordance with the eternal verities, Gershwin may have a kind of journalistic timeliness which rightly makes his work immensely popular at present.

This popularity may be unfortunate for him. Such success sometimes becomes an obstacle to progress. But the wise artist, in any line, realizes that popularity is a doubtful criterion of value, that adulation often goes to the mediocre and that work which outlasts the generations may not appeal to the popular taste in any generation. In short, it is well to remember that the best music appeals to only a small proportion of the men and women in the world, at any time. The vast majority doesn't even know about it.¹³⁷

For his part, Gershwin had his small reservations about the *Cuban Overture*. He apparently felt that the work was hurt by the outdoor setting which adversely affected the delicate percussion effects he put into the score.¹³⁸

An arrangement of "I Got Rhythm" for piano and orchestra and *Rhapsody in Blue* were heard in Paul Whiteman's concert of 4 August 1933. The Stadium Concerts then eschewed Gershwin and his music in 1934 and 1935. Evidently, the

¹³⁵ *The New York Times*, "17,000 Hear Gershwin Program," 17 August 1932.

¹³⁶ Pitts Sanborn, "Gershwin Sets Mark in Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 17 August 1932.

¹³⁷ Henry Beckett, "Gershwin Program Brings Record Audience to Stadium Concert by Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra," *New York Post*, 17 August 1932.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

public yen for more Gershwin was too great to ignore. On 9 and 10 July of 1936, the Stadium presented another all-Gershwin program. This time, the Broadway music was ignored in favor of four “serious” compositions: *An American in Paris*, Concerto in F, *Rhapsody in Blue*, and highlights from Gershwin’s most recent and perhaps greatest masterpiece, the opera, *Porgy and Bess*. Alexander Smallens, who one year earlier had led the world premiere of *Porgy and Bess* in Boston, conducted with Gershwin at the piano for the concerto and the *Rhapsody*, and, from the opera’s original cast, singers Anne Brown, Todd Duncan and Ruby Elzy with the Eva Jessye Choir in the opera highlights. Forbidding weather resulted in a smaller turnout during the first night.¹³⁹ Some of the critics were kinder to the *Porgy and Bess* than they had been to the other works on the program.¹⁴⁰ The *Brooklyn Eagle* dubbed the opera “Mr. Gershwin’s outstanding failure, an anomalous work, neither opera nor musical comedy, pretentious, inflated and essentially third rate.”¹⁴¹ The *Times*, on the other hand, found the music from the opera more impressive when heard in a concert setting: “In its genre it is well-made, catchy music.”¹⁴² Todd Duncan’s rendition of “I Got Plenty o’ Nuttin” so enthused the audience that he encored the number.¹⁴³

Whether the Stadium Committee originally planned another all-Gershwin night for the 1937 season is a matter of conjecture. Such an event became a necessity when, on 11 July of that year, Gershwin died of a brain tumor at the age of thirty-eight. The music world was shocked. That evening at Lewisohn Stadium, Reiner announced to the audience Gershwin’s passing. Then, on the spur of the moment, he conducted only the slow movement of the evening’s planned performance of Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony.¹⁴⁴ The *New York Herald Tribune* declared that “Mr. Gershwin soon discovered that he had given America a new kind of music, a music that it loved. For the first time in its long and ultra-respectable history American music became something that the man in the street delighted to hear. It had ceased to be essentially Colonial music, derived from European models, and had become a relatively new thing, full of native character and wit and charm, and with its sentimental prettiness artfully concealed.”¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ *The New York Sun*, “Gershwin At Stadium,” 10 July 1936. The newspaper reported the night as the hottest in New York City history.

¹⁴⁰ Francis D. Perkins, “Gershwin Joins In All-Gershwin Bill at Stadium,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 July 1936.

¹⁴¹ *Brooklyn Eagle*, “Gershwin Night at the Lewisohn Stadium With Excerpts From ‘Porgy and Bess,’” 10 July 1936.

¹⁴² *The New York Times*, “Gershwin Draws 7,000 To Stadium,” 10 July 1936.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ 144 Roger S. Vreeland, “Music, News and Views,” *Bergen Evening Record*, 12 July 1937.

¹⁴⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, “George Gershwin,” 12 July 1937.

In due course, a special committee was created to put together a Stadium tribute to Gershwin. Among the members of that committee were Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Sigmund Romberg, Deems Taylor, and Walter Damrosch.¹⁴⁶ The result was a 9 August all-Gershwin concert that featured an ample amount of serious and Broadway material under the direction of Grofé and Smallens and attracted what was believed to have been an even larger crowd than had attended previous Gershwin evenings.¹⁴⁷ Harry Kaufman was the piano soloist in the Concerto in F and the concert-ending *Rhapsody in Blue*. The same excerpts from *Porgy and Bess* performed a year earlier were once again presented with the same chorus and soloists. Particularly captivating the audience was the young Broadway sensation Ethel Merman, who sang “I Got Rhythm,” “They Can’t Take That Away From Me” and “The Man I Love”. She was asked to encore the first of these three standards.¹⁴⁸ Prior to the start of the second half of the concert, Minnie Guggenheimer stood before a microphone and asked the large audience to join with her in a moment of silence in a gesture of “affection and remembrance to George Gershwin, America’s most beloved and popular composer.” The crowd stood in silence for one minute.¹⁴⁹

The New York critics were mixed in their overall assessment of the departed composer. *The Times* declared that “the evening was, needless to say, one of unremitting pleasure; but one left the stadium thinking how little this harassed world could afford to lose a voice of such captivating esprit, such natural wit, such abundant potentiality.”¹⁵⁰ Henry Beckett was less charitable: “At the risk of bringing down present wrath and future scorn, I hereby predict that certain of these songs, touching, racially characteristic, cleverly devised, have the best chance of enduring. To me Gershwin’s more ambitious compositions seem tentative, experimental, groping, even inchoate, but the songs, perhaps less original, have charm, and charm is rare.”¹⁵¹

Despite the failure of certain critics to recognize the true merits of his music, Gershwin became, among many other things, the Stadium’s most-performed twentieth century composer. From 1936 to the Stadium Concerts’ final season of 1966, an all-Gershwin concert was presented every season. In

¹⁴⁶ *The New York Sun*, “Stadium To Give Gershwin Music,” 20 July 1937.

¹⁴⁷ Pollack, *Gershwin*, 215. The Hollywood Bowl concerts followed on September 8, 1937, staging a Gershwin memorial concert which featured, among others, Fred Astaire, Oscar Levant, and Al Jolson. Otto Klemperer conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

¹⁴⁸ Pitts Sanborn, “20,000 Hear Memorial to Gershwin,” *New York World-Telegram*, 10 August 1937.

¹⁴⁹ William G. King, “Gershwin Tribute at Stadium,” *The New York Sun*, 10 August 1937.

¹⁵⁰ *The New York Times*, “Gershwin Concert Has Record Crowd,” 10 August 1937.

¹⁵¹ Henry Beckett, “20,000 Throng Stadium In Homage to Gershwin,” *New York Post*, 10 August 1937.

1938, the concert was scheduled for 11 July, the first anniversary of Gershwin's death. Rain forced the concert to be postponed to the following evening. Another huge crowd heard Paul Whiteman lead the Philharmonic and his own ensemble, along with various choral forces and soloists, in both "serious" and Broadway fare. Among the works performed was a novelty, the last of Gershwin's to be heard at the Stadium: *Dawn of a New Day*, a choral work arranged by Bernard Mayers with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, set to a previously unpublished composition by his brother. The piece was chosen as the official anthem of the 1939 New York World's Fair.¹⁵²

As mentioned earlier, from 1939 through 1960, Alexander Smallens was entrusted the honor of conducting the annual all-Gershwin concert.¹⁵³ A typical evening began with an arrangement of *Strike Up The Band*, included at least one of the major works for piano and orchestra, *An American in Paris*, and either sung highlights from *Porgy and Bess* or Robert Russell Bennett's skillful *Porgy and Bess*, *A Symphonic Picture* for orchestra alone.¹⁵⁴ From time to time, the less-familiar serious works were unearthed as well as some of the Broadway show tunes. Among the soloists heard at the all-Gershwin concerts were the pianists Oscar Levant and Earl Wild and vocalists Leontyne Price and William Warfield. Todd Duncan, the original Porgy, remained a stalwart until the Stadium's final seasons. The Lewisohn Stadium all-Gershwin concerts did much to enhance the posthumous reception of Gershwin's music, which survived the critics' misgivings, its value far better gleaned by musicians and music lovers. Perhaps more importantly, they paid tribute to a beloved native son, one who left the world too soon, his musical legacy hugely significant if tragically incomplete.

Soloists

At Lewisohn Stadium during the course of the Thirties, soloists became more numerous and more prestigious. The concerts ceased staging talent contests and became less reliant on young and/or local products. The gradual improvement in amplification was a factor, as vocalists and such solo instruments as the 'cello no longer had to strain as much to be heard. But more importantly, performances at Lewisohn Stadium became attractive feathers in the caps of notable soloists. The 1930 season featured a young notable named Nelson Eddy in his first New York concert appearances. Eddy, a baritone,

¹⁵² *The New York Times*, "His Music Lives," 17 July 1938.

¹⁵³ After Smallens's retirement from the podium, Franz Allers, Arthur Fielder, Henry Lewis, and John Green presided over the remaining all-Gershwin concerts.

¹⁵⁴ Gershwin's own suite from *Porgy and Bess*, *Catfish Row*, was never heard at the Stadium.

sang in the 23 July performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony¹⁵⁵ and in the 5 and 6 August performances of Verdi's *Requiem*. Prior to his first Stadium appearance, Eddy, a Philadelphia native, had worked as a plumber's apprentice and as a reporter, taking singing lessons on the side. He had managed to perform with the Philadelphia Civic Opera and to study for a time in Dresden before coming to New York. A comical moment took place before the first Beethoven performance when Eddy learned—belatedly—that he was wearing the wrong outfit. For the Stadium concerts, male performers were required to wear a blue coat with white flannels. A makeshift outfit was prepared just in time for the concert.¹⁵⁶

Of his performance in the Beethoven, *The Times* wrote, "He sang with clarity of enunciation, good diction, excellent resonance and feeling for phrase. The extreme lower register was a bit weaker than the rest of his range, and the music from his throat would have gained had it been more vibrant and emotional. It was a more than promising debut under difficult circumstances."¹⁵⁷ The *Herald Tribune* opined, "Mr. Eddy, after some nervousness in his opening measures, gave evidence of having a well-schooled voice of warm timbre, and of considerable power. He lent vitality and mood to his lines."¹⁵⁸ The same newspaper had this to say about Eddy's turn with the Verdi: "Mr. Eddy, who had recently affected a promising debut in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, furthered the excellent impression then made to some extent. His voice is resonant and of considerable warmth, but he must guard against such unjudicious [*sic*] forcing as he was often led to last night if he does not wish to sacrifice the mellowness and evenness of his voice."¹⁵⁹ The *New York World* was slightly more critical: "Mr. Eddy seemed to me to be miscast, for the role is rather formidable for a purely lyric baritone. And Mr. Eddy is a baritone, not a basso-profundo. In spite of these handicaps he acquitted himself with distinction."¹⁶⁰ In spite of the above misgivings, Eddy performed six more times at the Stadium, undertaking the Verdi *Requiem* in August of 1931 and the Beethoven Ninth in July of 1931 and 1932. Eddy did not appear at the Stadium again following his 1932 performances. Not long afterwards, he achieved his greatest fame co-starring with soprano Jeanette MacDonald in a succession of Hollywood movie musicals.

¹⁵⁵ *The New York Times*, "Beethoven Concert Fills The Stadium," 24 July 1930. The 22 July performance was rained out.

¹⁵⁶ *Norristown, (PA) Times Herald*, "Nelson Eddy Wins New Music Laurels at New York Concert," 24 July 1930.

¹⁵⁷ *The New York Times*, "Beethoven Concert Fills The Stadium," 24 July 1930.

¹⁵⁸ *New York Herald Tribune*, "14,000 at Stadium Hear 9th Beethoven Symphony," 24 July 1930.

¹⁵⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Verdi's Requiem Presented At Stadium by Coates," 6 August 1930.

¹⁶⁰ *New York World*, "Music," 6 August 1930.

Another baritone voice attracted crowds at Lewisohn Stadium in 1932. Paul Robeson, who had starred on Broadway in *Show Boat* five years before his first Stadium appearance, was a star college athlete at Rutgers and was a law student at Columbia. He was later discovered by Eugene O'Neill and cast in one of the latter's plays, *The Emperor Jones*. Robeson subsequently turned to concert singing and received great acclaim in Europe before performing at the Stadium.¹⁶¹

On 31 July 1932, Albert Coates and the Philharmonic performed music by Borodin, Tchaikovsky, and Rubinstein before yielding the stage to Robeson and his accompanist, Lawrence Brown. The two performed four Negro spirituals and "Ol' Man River" from *Show Boat*, concluding with several encores. Sanborn opined: "His voice not only has uncommon power and range, but it is marked by an individual beauty of timbre that sets it apart from the other voices one hears."¹⁶² Henry Beckett echoed Sanborn's high praise while expressing disappointment that Robeson did not sing any Russian music, the orchestral music heard earlier that night having been exclusively Russian. "Probably this could not have been arranged, but someday Mr. Robeson should be heard in the role of Boris Godunoff. He would be splendid in that."¹⁶³ Unlike Eddy, Robeson returned to the Stadium on a number of occasions throughout the Forties, entertaining Stadium audiences with his singing while alienating some music lovers and causing Minnie Guggenheimer some grief with his pro-Soviet Union statements. Guggenheimer's daughter described her as a politically neutral person who wanted the Stadium Concerts to be neutral as well.¹⁶⁴

Major renovations took place prior to the start of the 1935 season, among them a new amplification system which, in the words of the *New York World-Telegram*, "will provide equal acoustic values in all parts of the stadium, and will remove the echo."¹⁶⁵ From this year on, this successful installation would better enable soloists to be heard in the top tiers of the seats.

Two violinists stood out during the 1935 season, one a youthful performer, the other an established master. The former was Ruggiero Ricci, a child prodigy who was able to sustain fame and success into adulthood. Ricci played the solo part in Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole*, with Van Hoogstraten and the orchestra accompanying. The critics noted the youngster's growing maturity as a musician

¹⁶¹ Pitts Sanborn, "Negro Music Fills Much of Stadium's Program Next Week," *New York World-Telegram*, 30 July 1932.

¹⁶² Pitts Sanborn, "Robeson Welcomed at Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 1 August 1932.

¹⁶³ Henry Beckett, "Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Albert Coates and Paul Robeson share Honors in Great Concert," *New York Post*, 1 August 1932.

¹⁶⁴ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother Is Minnie*, 128.

¹⁶⁵ *New York World-Telegram*, "Stadium Gets Renovation for Concerts," 18 June 1935.

and wrote accordingly, although *The New York Sun* declared, “he is still a boy prodigy.”¹⁶⁶ Ricci appeared two more times at the Stadium, having attained full maturity as an artist.

The master, Jascha Heifetz, had attracted an estimated 14,000 to 16,000 to the Stadium a little less than a week earlier on 5 August. Born in Russia, Heifetz was a child prodigy who toured Europe as a boy before leaving his homeland in 1917. At age six, he performed the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto. At age nine, he enrolled in the St. Petersburg Conservatory where, in addition to the next two violinists who will be mentioned shortly, he studied with the legendary violinist and teacher, Leopold Auer. In 1925, he became an American citizen. Considered by many to be the great violinist of his time, he performed Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto, Chausson’s *Poème*, and, as an encore, the adagio from J. S. Bach’s first Violin Sonata.¹⁶⁷ At least one critic failed to be swayed by the enormous public acclaim. Danton Walker wrote in the *Daily News*, “I must confess, however, that both numbers left me a little cold. Perhaps it is because neither has any great message or perhaps because the Stadium is not the best concert hall for a violinist. Or it is just possible that Heifetz, despite his superb technique, has no great message of his own?”¹⁶⁸ Heifetz was accused of unemotional playing from time to time, partially because of his severe onstage manner when performing. Maybe for reasons similar to Walker’s criticism, Heifetz gave fewer concerts after World War II, preferring to teach. Evidently, Heifetz had few misgivings about performing at Lewisohn Stadium prior to his later semi-retirement from the concert stage. He repeated the program the next day, then made an additional twelve further appearances.

The 1936 season featured the Stadium debut of a later Minnie Guggenheimer favorite, violinist Mischa Elman. He performed Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto on 13 July, Tchaikovsky’s the following evening and, accompanied by pianist Vladimir Padwa at both concerts, undertook a group of solos. Elman became known as an interpreter of the Tchaikovsky concerto and, according to Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer, frequently had to be cajoled by Minnie Guggenheimer into performing it when he insisted on performing something else.¹⁶⁹ More often than not, Minnie would prevail. Another prominent violinist, Efrem Zimbalist, made his Stadium debut in 1936, performing both the Tchaikovsky and Sibelius Violin Concertos on 17 August. The Sibelius concerto was something of a novelty. As Perkins summed up:

¹⁶⁶ *The New York Sun*, “Ricci at Stadium,” 12 August 1935.

¹⁶⁷ Pitts Sanborn, “16,000 Hear Heifetz Play at Stadium,” *New York World-Telegram*, 6 August 1935.

¹⁶⁸ Danton Walker, “14,000 Cheer Heifetz At The Stadium,” *New York Daily News*, 6 August 1935.

¹⁶⁹ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother Is Minnie*, 126.

Whether it will eventually be ranked among the composer's foremost works remains to be seen; not all of its musical ideas are among his most salient contributions, and the first movement, in some of its meditative rhapsodic passages, can be charged with diffuseness. Yet, in the notably expressive, devoted and poetic interpretation which it received from Mr. Zimbalist, it left a wish for further acquaintance.¹⁷⁰

Most of the critics echoed Perkins's praise for the soloist. The *New York Sun*, however, considered Zimbalist "unsure of himself" in both concerti and felt that his tone was "far too small for the vast spaces of the Stadium, and besides lacked warmth and resonance."¹⁷¹ Zimbalist appeared four more times at the Stadium. He was seen as a midpoint between Heifetz and Elman; he was less of a perfectionist than the former and less emotional than the latter.¹⁷²

Coloratura soprano Lily Pons made her Stadium debut on 27 June 1937. Accompanied by Vladimir Golschmann, she sang familiar arias by Mozart, Rossini and Donizetti, with encores by Delibes and Liadoff. According to *The New York Sun*, Pons was breathtaking in appearance as well as in voice; a spotlight captured her slim figure and stunning attire for all to see.¹⁷³ Associated with the Metropolitan Opera for twenty-eight seasons (1931-1959), Pons became a frequent Stadium guest artist, often appearing with her future husband, André Kostelanetz.¹⁷⁴

Lastly, on 21 July 1938, 76-years-old Polish piano virtuoso Moriz Rosenthal made his only Stadium appearance, performing Liszt's Hungarian Fantasia and his own arrangement for piano solo of Johann Strauss, Jr.'s *Viennese Carnival on themes of Johann Strauss*. Encores were demanded and obtained. *The New York Times* gushed, "The playing put forth by Mr. Rosenthal was another evidence of the enduring powers of that race of pianistic giants of the past generation of which he is one of the last still before the public."¹⁷⁵

Worthy of mention among this group of Stadium soloists are a number of Philharmonic musicians including cellist Alfred Wallenstein and violinists Hans Lange, Mishel Piastro, and John Corigliano, Sr., Philharmonic concertmaster from 1943 to 1966 and a frequent soloist to the end of the Stadium's days.

¹⁷⁰ Francis D. Perkins, "Zimbalist Plays 2 Concertos as Stadium Soloist," *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 August 1936.

¹⁷¹ *The New York Sun*, "Zimbalist At Stadium," 18 August 1936.

¹⁷² Boris Schwartz, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Efrem Zimbalist." London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001.

¹⁷³ *The New York Sun*, "Pons At Stadium," 28 June 1937: "A spotlight – the first, if memory serves, ever turned on a soloist at the Stadium – emphasized this (her) magnificence.

¹⁷⁴ Dennis K. McIntire and Alan Blyth. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Lily Pons." London: Macmillan, 2001.

¹⁷⁵ *The New York Times*, "Moriz Rosenthal Stadium Soloist," 22 July 1938.

Opera

At the beginning of the decade, Lewisohn Stadium programmed several concerts of opera excerpts. Among them was a Wagner evening featuring Metropolitan Opera soloists Elsa Alsen and Paul Althouse on 30 July 1930. Althouse, who according to Beckett was “the first American to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company without education abroad,”¹⁷⁶ was a frequent Stadium performer during the late twenties and the thirties, often called upon to sing in the annual performances of Verdi’s *Requiem* and Beethoven’s Ninth. While Beckett had no such complaints,¹⁷⁷ the *Daily Telegram* critic felt that the singers had a hard time projecting into the vast expanses of the Stadium.¹⁷⁸ Both critics praised Albert Coates for his professional rendering of the various overtures and excerpts. Alsen, Althouse, and Coates presented another Stadium program of Wagner on 15 and 16 August 1931. Althouse, with Hans Lange conducting, appeared alone for Wagner evenings on 24 and 25 July 1933. On 15 and 16 August of that same summer, Lange led Alfredo Gandolfi, Alice Kurkjian, and the orchestra in a wide range of excerpts and arias from various French and Italian operas.

In retrospect, these four programs can be seen as “baby steps” towards the later fully-staged productions that dominated most of the thirties at the Stadium. There were various factors that contributed to these occurrences. Guggenheimer came to believe that the purely instrumental programs had run their course and that the public demanded opera as a musical change of pace:

The crumbling of public support since 1929 is disturbing to us because we have every reason to believe that the depression [*sic*] has had nothing to do with it. We know that people are spending money for musical entertainment and we are convinced from the large nightly attendance at the Hippodrome this summer after the good winter season at the Metropolitan, that opera is the craze.

Guggenheimer was realistic about the combination of opera and the outdoors:

This does not mean that we will abandon our symphonic concerts. It is simply a desire on our part to serve the popular taste, but this vogue for opera will not last. Popular priced and open-air operas have been tried before, but never with marked success. This craze suddenly appeared last

¹⁷⁶ Henry Beckett, “Stars of Opera Join With Orchestra in Outdoor Wagner Evenings,” *New York Post*, 31 July 1930.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ *New York Daily Telegram*, “Wagner Music Gets Stadium’s Acclaim,” 31 July 1930.

winter and was due probably to the efforts of the Metropolitan. It will pass quickly because anything the public takes up violently fades quickly.¹⁷⁹

Guggenheimer's words proved prophetic. Following the 1933 season-ending performances of three operas, the Stadium showcased weekly operas in 1934 and 1935, gave only three operas in 1936, and settled for one or several a summer during most of the seasons that followed. The operas were greeted by varying crowds and mixed notices for the singers involved. Of special interest, of course, was the presence of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, a more virtuosic ensemble than that of the Met, performing full operas, a practice for which it had been called upon rarely during its long history.

Rain interfered with the scheduled 1933 performance of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. Initially intended to be fully staged and performed on 21 August, the Puccini opera was presented in concert form the next evening to a small crowd beneath further threatening skies. The administration was forced to scrap the idea of a full staging due to the weather.¹⁸⁰ Giuseppe Bamboschek conducted, Anna Roselle sang the title role and Dmitri Onofrei was Pinkerton. This inauspicious beginning notwithstanding, the Stadium planned two more operas to be staged after the final Stadium concert of 23 August. On 28 August, Bizet's *Carmen*, with Bamboschek conducting, Coe Glade in the title role and Onofrei as Don José, was halted after the first act due to rain.¹⁸¹ *Carmen* was rescheduled for 30 August, when it was performed without weather problems. At last, the weather held up for the 29 August production of Verdi's *Il trovatore*, the first fully-staged and costumed complete opera given at Lewisohn Stadium.¹⁸² Once again, Bamboschek presided with Roselle in the lead role of Leonora. Roselle, evidently unfamiliar with the role, noticeably needed help from the prompter.¹⁸³ At the *Carmen* on 30 August, audience turnout was estimated at 5,000 to 7,000 concertgoers.

This uneasy beginning notwithstanding, the Stadium Committee proceeded with ambitious plans for the next two seasons. In both 1934 and 1935, seven operas were given, each on two successive evenings. Alexander Smallens conducted every one of them, while also leading summer opera at Philadelphia's Robin Hood Dell as well as selected symphonic concerts at both venues. The 1934 season featured Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*, Wagner's *Lohengrin*, the *verismo* twin-bill of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunoff*, Verdi's *Aida*, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and

¹⁷⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Public Demand Puts Opera on Stadium's List," 18 August 1933.

¹⁸⁰ *The New York Sun*, "Stadium To Offer Two More Operas," 23 August 1933.

¹⁸¹ *The New York Times*, "'Carmen' Halted By A Rainstorm," 29 August 1933.

¹⁸² *The New York Times*, "'Il Trovatore' Wins Favor At Stadium," 30 August 1933.

¹⁸³ Pitts Sanborn, "'Trovatore' Well Sung as Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 30 August 1933.

Gounod's *Faust*. For the most part, the heavens smiled upon Lewisohn Stadium that summer, with rain affecting only the Puccini. The following summer, the Verdi, Gounod, Mussorgsky and Bizet operas were repeated with different casts, and Puccini's *La Bohème*, Verdi's *La traviata*, Puccini's *Tosca* and Borodin's *Prince Igor* also were heard. Rain interfered with only the *Aida*. In most cases, the casts were largely local talent, with few Europeans appearing at the Stadium.

The first performance of *Samson et Dalila* was interrupted by a humorous moment in which a black cat was accidentally let loose onstage, interrupting the performance. The cat was brought to the Stadium by a Met staff member as a sign of good luck. Margaret Matzenauer, the evening's Dalila, was momentarily thrown off, but recovered. Bass-baritone Alfredo Gandolfi stepped out of his High Priest character, caught the cat, and removed him from the proceedings. The performance then continued without further incident.

For the Saint-Saëns program, a new amplification system was installed. The critics were divided as to its merits. The *Post*'s Samuel Chotzinoff lamented that "the amplifiers last night did wonders for the people on the stage, but left the orchestra far behind. This was rather a pity, for the Philharmonic, as led by Mr. Alexander Smallens, was the real hero of the evening,"¹⁸⁴ Pitts Sanborn¹⁸⁵ and the *New York Mirror*¹⁸⁶ critic agreed with Chotzinoff on Smallens and the Philharmonic, while both were moderate in their evaluations of the singers. Different critics in town had their favorites among the cast members, as was (and is) to be expected. Olin Downes summed up the first experiment thusly: "Certain rough edges in this performance were to be expected. As a whole, it was an excellent augury of what is to come."¹⁸⁷

Lobengrin, *Carmen*, and the *verismo* twin-bill met with similar receptions, with different singers praised by different critics, favorable notices for Smallens and the orchestra, and occasional quibbles regarding the staging and the amplification. It must be noted, however, that the productions did not attract the capacity crowds that attended the Gershwin concerts and the Beethoven Ninths of the previous decade. Somewhat more successful at the box office was the Mussorgsky, which attracted crowds estimated at between 8,500 and 10,000 and featured a bass from Russia in the title role. Hailed as the successor to Feodor Chaliapin, George Youreneff made the trip from Russia in order to perform the two-night stint as the Stadium's Boris. The production, which featured The Art of Musical Russia chorus in the large cast, was hailed by the *Daily News*'s Danton

¹⁸⁴ Samuel Chotzinoff, "The Stadium Stages Its first opera," *New York Post*, 30 June 1934.

¹⁸⁵ Pitts Sanborn, "Matzenauer Wins Praise in Dalila Role," *New York World-Telegram*, 30 June 1934.

¹⁸⁶ *New York Mirror*, "Opera at the Stadium," 30 June 1934.

¹⁸⁷ Olin Downes, "First Opera Given In Stadium Series," *The New York Times*, 30 June 1934.

Walker as the finest production of the summer. He also hailed Youreneff as a worthy successor to Chaliapin.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, Sanborn felt that the bass-baritone's singing was uneven, but believed that his "smaller and more intimate" portrayal had merit.¹⁸⁹ The *New York Journal's* Henriette Weber praised everyone but Youreneff, stating, "He just 'got by,' that was all. His voice sounded pinched much of the time, and he was often not at ease."¹⁹⁰

Perhaps the New York critics were more subdued in expressing even stronger reservations out of concern for the maintenance of the Stadium season, which, as mentioned earlier, was haunted by deficits. One out-of-town voice was particularly condemning. *The Cincinnati Enquirer's* Joseph Kaye, in a 29 July 1934 editorial, declared the opera season an artistic and financial failure due largely to the mediocrity of the soloists and the problems of presenting opera in such a large outdoor venue: "If instead of going in for opera, so unsuitable for the Stadium, the management had engaged soloists of distinction, or any of the many feature attractions it is possible to obtain in New York, the expense would have been far less and the audiences incomparably greater. Last season nearly all records were broken by George Gershwin, as soloist and conductor, and a great house was drawn by a group of dancers not even of first rank reputation."¹⁹¹ Given the enormous crowds that attended the concerts featuring Jascha Heifetz and Gershwin and the relatively smaller crowds that saw the 1934 operas, it is possible that Kaye was correct in his evaluation. It is also worth noting that none of the opera performances from 1933 to 1938 produced a major vocalist at the level of Nelson Eddy or Marian Anderson. Nonetheless, the operas continued with the varying notices for the different cast members from the various New York critics. The 1935 season followed similarly.

The 1936 season included only three operas: Verdi's *Il trovatore*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride*, and Bizet's *Carmen*. By this time, even local critics had had their fill. On 17 July 1936, the *Brooklyn Eagle* summed up the proceedings as follows:

Opera performances at the Stadium are usually hit-and-miss affairs. The orchestra of course is better than one hears in the Winter season at the Metropolitan, and the casts are frequently as good; but there are no facilities for the staging of theatrical works at the Stadium, and, more important [*sic*], perhaps, rehearsal time is strictly limited. The results are performances

¹⁸⁸ Danton Walker, "'Godounoff' at Stadium Sets Mark to Shoot At," *New York Daily News*, 28 July 1934.

¹⁸⁹ Pitts Sanborn, "'Boris' Draws Big Audience To Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 28 July 1934.

¹⁹⁰ Henriette Weber, "Music," *New York Journal*, 28 July 1934.

¹⁹¹ Joseph Kaye, "Lewisohn Stadium," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 29 June 1934.

which, as heard, amount to rehearsals by competent, even expert, performers with the odds against them. But audiences adjust their demands to possible satisfactions, and opera at the Stadium, thus approached, yields enjoyment.

In spite of these expressed concerns, the 1936 *Carmen*, starring Bruna Castagna in the title role, attracted the largest turnout of the decade for an opera, a crowd estimated at 12,000.¹⁹² However, staged opera at the Stadium was less frequent after 1938. Richard Strauss's *Salome* was the sole staged opera of 1937,¹⁹³ *Carmen* again in 1938.

Finally, mention should be made of the 1937 Wagner Festival at the Stadium. Fritz Reiner led soloists and the orchestra in heavily pared-down performances of all four *Ring* cycle operas plus *Tristan und Isolde*. The result was met with mostly high praise for Reiner's conducting and the orchestra's playing, mixed reviews for the singers, and some reservations over the cuts themselves. For instance, the edited *Die Walküre* met with this response from *The Times's* Noel Strauss:

Had Mr. Reiner omitted the third act entirely and devoted his attention to the first two acts, with well-considered cuts where necessary to bring the performance within the time limits, the effect would undoubtedly have been vastly different. For, as Alfred Lorenz, the eminent German musicologist, and others have pointed out, the first and second divisions of the opera form a complete unit in themselves. They contain the whole story of Siegmund and Sieglinde, forming what the Germans term the "Siegmund-handlung" or Siegmund action.¹⁹⁴

Most of the other critics expressed similar concerns with the other four Wagner operas performed at the Wagner Festival. The turnout was disappointing, at least initially. *Das Rheingold* attracted an estimated 2,000

¹⁹² *New York Herald Tribune*, "Mme. Castagna Sings Carmen Before 12,000," 8 August 1936. The review also goes into great detail in criticizing the Stadium's faulty amplification system.

¹⁹³ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Philharmonic Announces 1st Stadium Music," 9 June 1937. Most intriguing, however, was the 1937 proposed staging of Shostakovich's provocative *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. The plan had to be scrapped: "The plan of producing Shostakovich's 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk' as the second Stadium opera of the season in August has had to be given up, owing to the impossibility of obtaining the music. It was said yesterday that the score and parts used by the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras for their performances of this work had been returned to Russia, and that the only other extant set of score and parts, which is also in Europe, could not be obtained in time for the necessary preparation. What opera will be substituted has not yet been decided." In the end, only *Salome* was staged in 1937. As for the Shostakovich, no mention was made in the papers of the time concerning the terror that Stalin inflicted on the composer over the opera and the composer's subsequent restoration to the dictator's favor with his Fifth Symphony.

¹⁹⁴ Noel Strauss, "Stadium Audience Braves Downpour," *The New York Times*, 15 July 1937.

patrons; the previous day's rain may have been partly to blame. Beckett, in his rave review, decried the small attendance.¹⁹⁵ However, the concluding *Tristan* attracted an estimated 12,000. As *The New York Sun*'s William G. King speculated, "The size of the crowd was due in part to the ever-increasing popularity of 'Tristan,' in part to the perfect weather, and in part, unless this reviewer errs sadly, to the fact that word had spread of the extraordinarily fine performances of the Wagnerian masterworks being given at the Stadium under the direction of Fritz Reiner."¹⁹⁶

Paul Althouse was the Festival's *heldentenor*, playing Loge in *Das Rheingold*, Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, Siegfried in the two remaining *Ring* operas, and Tristan. Florence Easton was Brünnhilde and Isolde. In *Das Rheingold*, Edwina Eustis and Florence Kirk were asked to sing several roles, probably in the interest of saving money. Whether the audience was able to follow the action as well as the critics remains a matter of conjecture. Libretti were not passed out at the Stadium. Thanks to Reiner's cuts, each of the five Wagner operas was performed in under two hours' time. Although other complete operas were undertaken, this was the only time that "complete" Wagner operas were heard at the Stadium.¹⁹⁷

The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts met the challenges posed by the Great Depression head on and, if anything, became more impressive artistically than they were during the previous decade. While somewhat less devoted to new music, the festival did take on opera and did attract more and more talent to the City College campus, proving that it had become highly prized by performers as well as by New Yorkers. Of course, it can be argued that the Stadium Concerts faced perhaps even greater challenges, artistically and otherwise, during the seven seasons that followed. In the next chapter, I discuss those challenges and demonstrate how the festival still thrived on most levels despite them.

¹⁹⁵ Henry Beckett, "Wagner Festival Opens Under Reiner at Stadium," *New York Post*, 13 July 1937.

¹⁹⁶ William G. King, "'Tristan' Ends Wagner Festival," *The New York Sun*, 28 July 1937.

¹⁹⁷ It is matter of conjecture to what extent other operas featured cuts, but the reviews suggest that none were abridged to the extent that were the Wagner operas performed by Reiner.

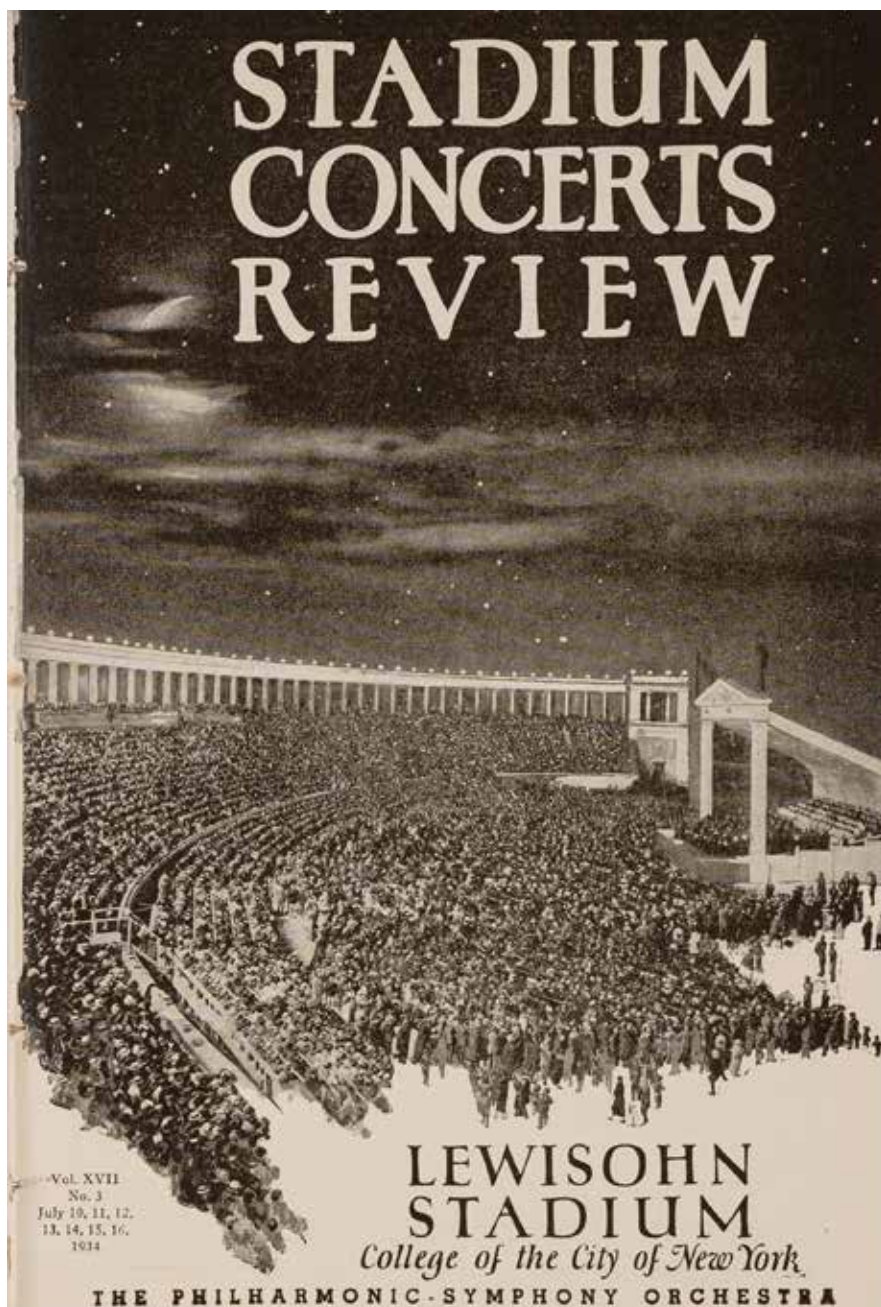


Figure 16: A typical cover of a Stadium Concerts program.
Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives
(ID: 12327 1934 Jul 09).

Chapter 5

Civilization's Trustee: 1939 44

Amidst the rising deficits and the heavy tolls of World War II, the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts continued to provide New Yorkers with good music at low prices. The practice of having multiple “principal conductors” lead the New York Philharmonic for one to two weeks (augmented by occasional one-shot “guest conductors”), which began during the previous decade, continued during these seven seasons and beyond. Among these conductors were several notables making their American debuts as well as three future New York Philharmonic music directors.

While native composers were certainly not shunned completely, fewer of their works were heard during this period in Stadium history than in the previous two. In fact, Soviet composers were championed more often and many all-Russian programs were given, reflecting support for America’s allies as well as perhaps some left-wing sentiment. As will be seen, several of the handful of new American pieces championed during these years were leftist in content as well.

The Stadium Concerts continued to attract the finest soloists in classical music, as well as some unique oddities. In addition to such artists as Heifitz, Robeson, and Elman, who had performed at the Stadium during the previous decade, some new “big” names made the trip uptown to participate in this “Music for the People” experiment. Financial concerns led to the first Stadium appearances by popular acts with mixed results artistically as well as at the box office. During these six seasons at least, the Stadium crowds continued to prefer Tchaikovsky and Gershwin to Broadway and Tin Pan Alley. The number of opera performances declined considerably as Mrs. Guggenheimer predicted they would, the Stadium relying on familiar works in that form throughout the period rather than exploring risky new fare of either past or present. It was during these six seasons that the practice of giving opera overtures, excerpts, and arias in concert form (usually featuring Metropolitan Opera soloists) began, a practice that would continue to the end of the Stadium Concerts. These performances ultimately replaced the staged full operas.

Lewisohn Stadium and World War II

In the several years prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, many Americans were well aware of the swirling tides of chaos and violence emanating from Europe. Mrs. Guggenheimer summed up Lewisohn Stadium’s role in the world:

Because of the universality of music's language, music is the greatest common bond we have. With Europe darkened by intolerance, divided by hate, America must accept the role of civilization's trustee. The Stadium Concerts, we feel, are an instrument toward preserving that civilization to all of us. A contribution to the Stadium is not only a contribution to music, but a contribution to the cause of democracy.

It was never more essential that this enterprise should be continued; for it is one of the means by which we may make clear to thousands of Americans how precious a thing our civilization is and how dependent it is upon the fruits of the spirit and the beauty of man's thoughts.¹

Guggenheimer's words sum up the freedom that marked the undertaking throughout the war years. The Stadium Concerts did their best to expose New Yorkers to the finest music regardless of the composers' nationalities or political correctness. Great art survives its creator as well as the politics of his or her time. Consequently, while the concerts frequently emphasized music from America's allies (while programming less American music than in prior decades), there was no ban on German music as had been the case when the Stadium Concerts began over twenty years earlier.

The majority sentiment was summed up by a 19 June 1941 letter to *The New York Sun* written by Mr. Winthrop Parkhurst in response to a correspondent who proposed banning Wagner from the Stadium Concerts:

One of your correspondents expressed the devout hope that Wagner's music will not be played at the Lewisohn Stadium this summer because Wagner is Hitler's favorite composer. Well, Hitler's favorite beverage is water, so let's go thirsty. Hitler's favorite gas is oxygen, so let's suffocate. Hitler's favorite nutriment is food, so let's starve to death.

If not the most popular Stadium composer as he had been in seasons past, Wagner was performed fairly frequently during these six seasons nonetheless. Living German composers were neglected, however, with one exception: Richard Strauss was represented exclusively by two tone poems, *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Juan*, both well-established in the canon by this time.

During these war years, the Stadium Concerts, while remaining true to their artistic aims, did their part to provide culture and relaxation for American soldiers. Throughout the Stadium's run, these brave young men were allowed free admission into the Stadium along with their girlfriends on weekends, when most of them were able to get away from such training areas as Fort Dix and the New York Navy Yard, among others. Initially, the Stadium Concerts offered the

¹ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Stadium Plans Concert Series For Fair Guests," 14 December 1938.

soldiers free admission to all of the concerts but found that few soldiers were able to make the commute during the week. The soldiers and their significant others sat in the field section.²

From time to time, the Stadium programmed patriotic concerts and even loaned itself to popular concerts held in order to raise money for war bonds. For example, on 4 July 1944, such a concert was held, featuring a range of talents from Met Opera star Jan Peerce to such notables as Hazel Scott, Jimmy Savo, the Mills Brothers, Tab Smith and his Band, and many others. On occasion, the Stadium staged a concert featuring talented men in uniform. On 29 July 1944, duo-pianists (and Seamen 1-C) Arthur Whittimore and Jack Lowe shared the stage with conductor and warrant officer (and future music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra) Thor Johnson and piano soloist Sgt. Eugene List, who played the solo part in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. The concert featured a medley of patriotic songs entitled Tribute to Fighting Men, arranged by Cpl. Russell Howland, as well as the world premiere of Ulysses Kay's tone poem, *Of New Horizons*.³

On the whole, except for several other patriotic concerts that are discussed later, pro-war sentiment was left out of the proceedings. This may have been a reflection of the belief that the concert hall (or stadium) was a refuge from the world's troubles. Most of the concerts during these years were straightforward forays into the canon with occasional, non-threatening works by living Americans and Soviets. Audiences varied depending on the weather and on the programming, with Tchaikovsky and Gershwin concerts always assured of high attendance figures. The increasingly frequent use of big-name soloists escalated during these seven seasons as well, remaining a common practice to the conclusion of the Stadium Concerts.

America did not suffer another attack on her own soil after Pearl Harbor and would not again until decades later. However, on several occasions, the Stadium took proper precautions nonetheless, bathing the structure with various-colored lights and employing air-raid wardens as ushers in case anything fell from the sky other than rain.⁴ Nonetheless, Mother Nature dealt the Stadium its most serious blow on 28 July 1942 when a major thunder and lightning storm destroyed the Stadium's acoustical shell. The following evening, Fritz Reiner, Jascha Heifetz, and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra presented

² *The New York Times*, "Stadium Arranges Aid To Service Men," 29 May 1941.

³ *New York World-Telegram*, "Big Names in Uniform to Perform in Stadium," 28 July 1944.

⁴ Douglas Watt, "Stadium Concerts Enter 25th Year Under Blue Lights," *New York Daily News*, 19 June 1942.

an all-Brahms evening from the Stadium field flanked by a make-shift shell.⁵ At intermission, Mayor LaGuardia addressed the audience, promising a new shell for the following season.⁶ That such a shell was soon completed spoke volumes about the Stadium Concerts' importance to New York, despite the war and losses of anywhere from \$40,000 to \$70,000 a season.⁷

Conductors

The practice of hiring a group of principal conductors augmented by a few guest conductors began in the thirties and continued throughout the remainder of the Stadium's run. Previous seasons led by Van Hoogstraten and his two predecessors revealed to those in charge that weeks of daily outdoor concerts were too grueling for one conductor to handle. Therefore, the seasons were divided among orchestra-leaders, many of whom were up-and-comers looking to make their names in New York as had Reiner, Ormandy, Iturbi and others. The practice continued during the forties, as audiences encountered three future New York Philharmonic music directors, several important conductors in their Stadium debuts, and other important figures.

Three Future New York Philharmonic Music Directors

In 1940, Artur Rodzinski conducted nine of the Stadium's first eleven concerts. Two years later, he directed five concerts. Then in 1943, he became the first music director of the New York Philharmonic. Prior to Rodzinski, the Philharmonic was led by a "principal conductor" who simply led more concerts than did any guest conductors. The term, "music director," had yet to be used. Howard Shanet has described the "music director":

He would still have to work with the stick in hand and the score in head, but his most characteristic tool would be the plan in mind. It was assumed that he would supervise all musical and artistic aspects of the Philharmonic's activities. He would control the personnel of the orchestra. He

⁵ Grena Bennett, "Heifetz Gives Concert on Stadium Field," *New York Journal American*, 29 July 1942.

⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Stadium Music Heard Without Acoustical Shell," 30 July 1942. The program, which consisted of Brahms's Academic Festival Overture, Fourth Symphony, and Violin Concerto, was originally scheduled for 27 July 1942. Inclement weather forced the concert to be given two evenings later. Heifetz was the soloist in the concerto, which may have been a big reason for why this program was given, while several others, including Johann Strauss's complete *The Gypsy Baron*, were cancelled. In the case of the Strauss, lack of facilities due to the storm was a factor as well.

⁷ Ibid.

would choose assistant and guest conductors. He would select soloists. He would plan the repertoire for each season, coordinating the programs of guest conductors with his own.⁸

Music Director of the Cleveland Orchestra from 1933 to 1943, Rodzinski had made a number of appearances with the Philharmonic during the previous decade, when he vied with John Barbirolli for the Philharmonic's principal conductor post (the latter winning out, with mixed results).⁹ It was perhaps inevitable that the Polish-born maestro would appear at the Stadium as well; like many conductors, he was eager to win over New York. Rodzinski met with a favorable reception. He began the 1940 season with a 20 June all-Brahms program (the first of several) that featured Rudolf Serkin in the first of his two Stadium appearances playing the solo part in the Second Piano Concerto.¹⁰ *The Sun's* Oscar Thompson opined, "the orchestra played with admirable spirit and unity under Mr. Rodzinski's leadership."¹¹ Grena Bennett enthused, "Every mood was eloquently reflected, and Mr. Rodzinski commanded his forces with the authority and taste of a conscientious and capable musician."¹² The following evening, Rodzinski presented an all-French program, comprising Thomas's Overture to *Mignon*, Franck's Symphony in D minor, Debussy's *La Mer*, and Ravel's *La Valse*, plus the *Marseillaise* in tribute to war-torn France. The *Herald Tribune's* critic wrote, "Dr. Rodzinski came interpretatively into his own and demonstrated once more that he is among the first-class conductors of our day."¹³ The *Brooklyn Eagle's* Miles Kastendieck proclaimed, "The precision and clarity with which the orchestra is playing under the exacting beat of Dr. Rodzinski made for well-articulated performances throughout the evening."¹⁴ These and other reviews back up Shanet's description of Rodzinski: "Rodzinski's style of conducting was plainer, more straightforward, less Romantic than that of the interpreter-conductors. His tempos were always steady and the beats

⁸ Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 297.

⁹ Donald Rosenberg, *The Cleveland Orchestra Story* (Cleveland: Gray & Company, 2000), 126-27, 187, 189. According to both Rosenberg and Shanet, Rodzinski's career was often adversely affected by his strained relationship with his manager and Philharmonic chief executive, Arthur Judson. Rosenberg states that Judson unilaterally chose Barbirolli over Rodzinski, who nonetheless maintained his ties with New York in hopes of eventually taking over, which he did in 1943.

¹⁰ Serkin's only other Stadium appearance took place exactly fifteen years later, on 20 June 1955, in an all-Beethoven program: the Overture to Prometheus, Piano Concerto No. 5 "Emperor," and Symphony No. 3, "Eroica," conducted by then-Philharmonic Music Director Dmitri Mitropoulos.

¹¹ Oscar Thompson, "Stadium Concerts Open," *The New York Sun*, 21 June 1940.

¹² Grena Bennett, "10,000 at Opening of Stadium Concerts," *New York Journal-American*, 21 June 1940.

¹³ *New York Herald Tribune*, "French Music Heard by 3,000 At the Stadium," 22 June 1940.

¹⁴ Miles Kastendieck, "French Program Is Rodzinski's Stadium Feature," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 22 June 1940.

were always shown clearly, so that the orchestra was sure of where it was at every moment.”¹⁵

During his 1940 engagement, Rodzinski led the orchestra in only two American compositions: Roy Harris’s *Challenge, 1940* and William Grant Still’s *And They Lynched Him on a Tree*, both world premieres. Otherwise, he confined himself to warhorses and then-accepted recent European fare, including two performances of Shostakovich’s First Symphony which he had recorded in Cleveland. In 1942, he surprisingly sprinkled his traditional programs with several performances of a medley of tunes from *Show Boat*. Rodzinski led the opening concerts of the 1945 and 1946 Stadium seasons before severing his ties with Judson and the Philharmonic and taking over the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1947. His temperate podium leadership contrasted sharply with his eccentric off-the-podium manner, which may have been the main reason for Judson’s misgivings about him.¹⁶

This was a man, after all, who famously kept a loaded gun in his back pocket as a good luck charm while conducting (the gun was purchased, but never used, to kill the husband of a woman he coveted).¹⁷ This was a man whose interest in maintaining his health led him to, among other things, purchase a goat farm in Western Massachusetts for the purpose of drinking the goats’ milk.¹⁸ And, of course, this was a music director who went so far as to physically attack one of his New York Philharmonic assistant conductors, Leonard Bernstein, strangling him in a fit of rage.¹⁹

Also worthy of mention is the fact that the increasingly conservative Judson did not approve of Rodzinski’s more radical programming, having evidently learned from the unadventurous Toscanini how best to lure concertgoers. Throughout his New York tenure, Rodzinski was distressed with the lack of programming freedom that he had enjoyed in Cleveland for ten seasons prior. This freedom included concert performances of operas, among them, Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in its American premiere, Mahler symphonies, and Schoenberg’s Violin Concerto. Rodzinski followed his brief New York tenure with only a single season at the helm of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. “My husband was spoiled by his decade in Cleveland,” his wife, Halina, would later lament.²⁰

¹⁵ Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 300.

¹⁶ Darryl Lyman, *Great Jews In Music* (Middle Village, NY, Jonathan David Publishers, 1986), 176.

¹⁷ Rosenberg, *Cleveland*, 134-35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁹ Lyman, *Great Jews*, 176.

²⁰ Rosenberg, *Cleveland*, 198-99.

While Rodzinski's ascent to the Philharmonic podium could have been foreseen by some, few Stadium-goers anticipated twelve-year-old Lorin Maazel's rise to international celebrity on 5 August 1942, when he made his debut with the New York Philharmonic.²¹ This is not to say that the youngster, a child prodigy who conducted a number of orchestras prior to the Philharmonic, did not make a big impression. In a program of Mozart's Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and Tchaikovsky's Suite from *The Nutcracker*, op. 71a and *Marche Slav*, Maazel acquitted himself well and the critics responded with mostly positive notices. Bennett wrote: "That he is a remarkable young man there is no doubt for he led that great aggregation of instrumentalists with the assurance and authority of a mature musician."²² *The New York Times* somewhat less enthusiastically wrote of Maazel's rendering of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, "the beat was clear and the conductor showed that he knew what he wanted. He also showed abundance of temperament and energy. Understandably, however, the reading did not have much profundity."²³ Perhaps the most intriguing review, given many latter-day receptions of the adult Maazel, was from the *Herald Tribune's* Robert Lawrence:

How many of these interpretations were Lorin's and how many his teacher's could not easily be determined. Certain over-theatrical gestures and attitudes bore evidence of coaching. But the tracing of sources is unimportant beside the manifestation and growth of a big talent. Maazel conducts without a score, which may or may not be good for him at this stage of his development. There is occasionally in his work a feeling of virtuosity for its own sake—a tendency to be shunned, if it is not to give rise in time to musical mountebankery, to the negation of a great natural gift. It is for Lorin still to ripen, rather than to astonish. He has a clear road ahead.²⁴

Maazel has the distinction, like Rodzinski, of being a conductor who had held music director positions in Cleveland (1972-1982) as well as New York (2002-2009). His noteworthy career had its share of ups and downs, the probable low point being his stint at the helm of the Vienna State Opera. In 1982, he began what should have been a four-year contract only to resign less than two years later amidst criticism of his management and interpretative style. In Cleveland, he split all involved (listeners as well as musicians) down the middle; some were defenders, some were detractors. There again, there was

²¹ Previously, Maazel conducted the Interlochen High School Orchestra and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, among other ensembles.

²² Grena Bennett, "Boy Conductor Cues Players From Memory," *New York Journal-American*, 6 August 1942.

²³ *The New York Times*, "Philharmonic Led By Lorin Maazel," 6 August 1942.

²⁴ Robert Lawrence, "Lorin Maazel, At 12, Conducts At the Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 August 1942.

the matter of his musical proclivities. Some felt that Maazel did not fit with the Cleveland approach to music-making, the George Szell tradition²⁵, while others felt that he brought about positive change after George Szell's somewhat rigid, literalist approach. A number of Cleveland Orchestra members resigned in protest during Maazel's tenure.²⁶

Perhaps Maazel was more "mature" at twelve than the critics realized. His conducting style throughout his career was much like Lawrence described in the forties. As Maazel himself put it, "I don't believe in the mechanical reproduction of what is on the printed page. You can't do it anyway; the language of music notation is subject to an infinite number of interpretations."²⁷ As such, his interpretations often involved all kinds of mannerisms and inflections that distorted the music, making the performance as much about Maazel as the composer. There may not have been a place for such a conductor in Cleveland, but there may have been a place for it elsewhere. At the end of Maazel's New York tenure, Philharmonic historian John Canarina compared Maazel to such flamboyant maestros as Stokowski, Koussevitzky, and Reiner, who certainly did inflect compositions with their unique sounds. As Canarina writes, such an approach is often frowned upon today. Canarina also states, as have others, that Maazel may have inserted mannerisms partially to ward off boredom, having found the challenge of conducting too easy from childhood on.²⁸

Maazel conducted at the Stadium two additional times. On 17 July 1943, he led the orchestra in Beethoven's *Egmont Overture*, Franck's *Symphony in D minor*, Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, and Liszt's *Les Préludes*. On 5 August of the following year, he programmed Deems Taylor's *Casanova: Ballet Music* along with Weber's *Overture to Der Freischütz*, Mendelssohn's "Symphony No. 4 ("Italian")", Bach's *Prelude to the Violin Sonata in E major*, and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol*.

The third of the future Philharmonic music directors who made his Stadium debut during the war years was perhaps the most beloved. It can also be argued that he was almost as flamboyant and distinct in his approach to conducting as was Maazel. After studies at Harvard University and the Curtis Institute of Music, where his conducting teacher was Fritz Reiner, and summers as Serge Koussevitzky's student and assistant at the Tanglewood Conducting Institute, Massachusetts native Leonard Bernstein was appointed assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic in 1943. Over the next several seasons, Bernstein not only survived

²⁵ Rosenberg, *Cleveland*, 421.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 448.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 426.

²⁸ Canarina, *Philharmonic*, 420.



Figure 17: Leonard Bernstein and Louis Armstrong before the first Jazz Jam-boree which took place on 14 July 1956.

Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, Jack Bradley Collection (ID: 2006.1.315).

Rodzinski's physical assault, but achieved great fame when he substituted for an ailing Bruno Walter on 14 November 1943. He remained a star of the music world as a composer of musicals as well as a music educator on the popular television series, *Omnibus*, which was presented on CBS in the early-to-mid fifties.

Despite his many triumphs in the concert hall in America and abroad, Bernstein had to wait fifteen years after his debut for a major American orchestra to hire an American music director. Among the positions he failed to land were those of the Boston Symphony and Rochester Philharmonic Orchestras, both of which chose European maestros, Charles Munch in 1949 and Erich Leinsdorf in 1947, instead. In 1958, however, the New Yorkers took the plunge, giving Bernstein the opportunity to be not only the first American music director of a major American orchestra, but a composer/conductor much like one of his favorite composers, Gustav Mahler, himself a Philharmonic principal conductor for a season and one-half. Bernstein was music director from 1958 to 1969.

To this day, opinions vary on both Bernstein's music and his conducting. *West Side Story*, *Chichester Psalms*, and the overture to the opera, *Candide*, are still cherished to this day, the latter having become something of a signature work for the Philharmonic (they continue to maintain a tradition of performing the work without a conductor). But it may be as a conductor and educator that Bernstein truly claimed greatness. A sabbatical in the middle of his Philharmonic tenure, (the 1964-65 season) and his later stepping-down from the helm in 1969, both done in order to allow him time to compose, did not result in much production. Bernstein spent the better part of his last two decades as the Philharmonic's laureate conductor and an international guest conductor, sticking more to the mainstream canon rather than taking on recent American composers as he did often at Lincoln Center.²⁹

It is difficult to think of any Young People's Concerts more admired than Bernstein's. As was the case with Gershwin, his crossover appeal aided his considerable popularity, as did his openness to many styles of music. His uniquely charismatic personality helped as well. He also maintained close ties to Tanglewood and the Hollywood Bowl as conductor and teacher. A comment Bernstein made at a 1959 Young People's Concert may well have been a credo for the Stadium Concerts as well: "Everyone thinks they know what they mean by 'classical' music. But in fact, we use that word because we can't think of a better one."³⁰

As a Philharmonic music director, he had his detractors, particularly *The Times's* critic, Harold Schonberg. As can be heard on many recordings led by

²⁹ Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 475-83.

³⁰ 30 Allen Shawn, *Leonard Bernstein: An American Musician* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 4.

Bernstein, the Philharmonic was not always as consistent as such orchestras as Cleveland and Chicago, with precision and intonation problems sometimes abounding. But like the Stadium Concerts themselves, the successful evenings and recordings were and remain to this day generally cherished by many. No other Philharmonic music director or principal conductor has yet to have had a New York City street named after him; West 65th street between Columbus and Amsterdam avenues is now known as Leonard Bernstein Way. Indeed, his shadow still looms over Lincoln Center much like George Szell's does over Cleveland's Severance Hall, as can be gleaned by the Philharmonic's programming of his complete orchestral works to celebrate his one-hundredth birthday.

On 13 July 1944, the twenty-five-year old Leonard Bernstein took the podium for a concert of William Schuman's *American Festival Overture*, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, with Nathan Milstein as soloist, and Sibelius's First Symphony. The next evening was a Tchaikovsky-Ravel affair, with Bernstein playing the solo part in the latter's Piano Concerto in G, and Lukas Foss guest-conducting, in his only Stadium appearance,³¹ and then conducting the former's *Romeo and Juliet* and Fourth Symphony. The next night, Bernstein conducted his own *Jeremiah Symphony* as well as Rossini's Overture to *William Tell*, Richard Strauss's *Don Juan*, and Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*. Thus, 1944 Stadium audiences were treated to a triple threat: Leonard Bernstein, as conductor-composer-pianist.

The *Herald Tribune's* Paul Bowles wrote of the first concert, "Last night's combination of Mr. Mendelssohn, Mr. Bernstein, Mr. Milstein and the orchestra was a happy occasion, the music coming out with airy grace and a fitting sense of effortlessness."³² The *World-Telegram's* Robert Bagar was somewhat less complimentary, leveling a charge that was heard time and again throughout Bernstein's career:

I think Mr. Bernstein might dispense with his improvised choreography on the podium. It's not a help to watch his antics and try to listen to music at the same time. He's one or two up on Sir Thomas Beecham. Yet the young batonist confined his ballet energies to the purely orchestral numbers, wisely refraining from doing the Big Apple³³ during the Mendelssohn. Anyway, he possesses a great talent and I guess he'll come along.³⁴

Three days later, following the complete traversal of Bernstein's triple-performance, Bagar had this to say:

³¹ Foss became a respected composer-conductor best known for his years as music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic and Milwaukee Symphony Orchestras.

³² Paul Bowles, "Stadium Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 July 1944.

³³ The "Big Apple" to which the critic refers was not the nickname for New York City but a dance craze in the late thirties that can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49ocW71YPfs>.

³⁴ Robert Bagar, "Milstein Gets New Acclaim at Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 14 July 1944.

it was his conducting which, I think, made the greatest impression. It isn't often that a young man of 25 bursts forth with the éclat of Mr. Bernstein in an honest-to-goodness embarrassment of riches. And it is difficult to evaluate exactly each of these riches in the brief time he has been professionally before the public.

The least that can be said of him is that he is prodigiously equipped musically. What he has in store for us as a composer time, no doubt, will tell, and likewise regarding his conducting, which, at the present time, is not completely removed from the apprenticeship stage.³⁵

Bernstein made sporadic appearances at the Stadium during the next fifteen years on his way to his ascension to the Philharmonic throne, becoming a favorite of Guggenheimer's as well as of Stadium audiences.

Notable Stadium Debuts

The 1939 season began with a notable Stadium debut: on 14 June, former New York Symphony Orchestra conductor Walter Damrosch made his only Stadium appearance. He directed Karl Goldmark's *In the Spring Overture* and Brahms's Second Symphony, and paired with Stadium favorite Albert Spalding in Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. Following the Concerto, a piano was brought out and Damrosch accompanied Spalding in the slow movement of Brahms's D minor violin sonata.³⁶ Damrosch, who had replaced his father, Leopold, at the helm of the Symphony Society, was a less dictatorial conductor than Toscanini who, on the other hand, was much more adventurous in his programming, to the point of premiering Gershwin's Concerto in F and *An American in Paris*. Damrosch also programmed Mahler at a time when audiences had yet to accept him and gave the American premieres of Tchaikovsky's fourth and sixth symphonies. But he made few recordings. In the end, his activities as musical advisor for the NBC network from 1927 on and his hosting of the "Musical Appreciation Hour" from 1928 (the year of the Philharmonic's merger with the Symphony's) to 1942 may have been more cherished than his actual conducting.³⁷

Then again, not all listeners approved of his handling of music education. I remember a talk given by Harold Schonberg who began by stating that, as long as he lived, he would never forgive Damrosch. The reason? On his show, the maestro taught children what he called a simple way to remember the main

³⁵ Robert Bagar, "Bernstein Talent Shines In 3 Roles at Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 17 July 1944.

³⁶ Pitts Sanborn, "Stadium Concert Is Led by Damrosch," *New York World-Telegram*, 15 June 1939.

³⁷ H. E. Kreibel, Richard Aldrich, H. C. Colles/R. Allen Lott. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Damrosch." London: Macmillan, 2001.

theme of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. He sang to them, "This is the symphony that Schubert wrote but never finished..."

A little more than a month later, Lily Pons, by now much-admired by Stadium audiences, performed with her well-known husband, André Kostelanetz, in his Stadium debut. Unlike Damrosch, the Russian-born maestro would become a fixture to the end of the Stadium's days. At the time of his first Stadium appearance, Kostelanetz was best known as a radio conductor who presented abridged versions of the classics. On 17 July 1939, he performed for the first time with a major orchestra in front of a capacity crowd. In a program that mixed opera arias with classical orchestral works, Kostelanetz led the Philharmonic in music by Weber, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, William Walton, and Johann Strauss.³⁸ In *The New York Sun*, Irving Kolodin wrote:

For this listener, however, there was a particular interest in the conducting of Mr. Kostelanetz, who has not previously been heard here as the head of such an orchestra. Possessing a radio reputation of a rather specialized nature, Mr. Kostelanetz demonstrated that he does not require fancy arrangements of his own carefully trained players to convey his qualities as a conductor. His reading of Weber's "Oberon" overture (without benefit of score, as all his conducting was last night) was sure handed, alert and musicianly. Its poetry was rather matter-of-fact, but Mr. Kostelanetz's control of the orchestra never wavered.

Temperamentally he found his best opportunities in Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" overture (which some listeners seemed to regard as an orchestration of the currently popular tune borrowed from it). All of its

³⁸ The program consisted of the following:

1. CARL MARIA VON WEBER: Overture to *Oberon*

2. GIUSEPPE VERDI: Aria, "Caro nome" (from *Rigoletto*)

GABRIEL FAURÉ: *Roses d'Ispahan*

EVA DELL'ACQUA: *Villanelle*

Miss Pons

3. NIKOLAY RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: Introduction and March from *Le Coq d'Or*

4. NIKOLAY RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: Hymn to the Sun from *Le Coq d'Or*

-INTERMISSION-

5. PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY: *Romeo and Juliet* (Overture Fantasy)

6. LÉO DELIBES: "Bell Song" from *Lakmé*

Miss Pons

7. WILLIAM WALTON: *Façade*

8. JOHANN STRAUSS: Waltz, *On The Beautiful Blue Danube*

points were made with certainty, some of them with finesse in a reading dominated by energy and strongly marked contrasts.³⁹

The other critics shared Kolodin's reserved praise for Kostelanetz, who remained a popularizer of classical music throughout his career. Kostelanetz later led the New York Promenade Concerts which, in addition to the free Central Park concerts, replaced the Stadium Concerts after the construction of Lincoln Center in the early sixties helped to end them.⁴⁰

Exactly one week later, French conductor Paul Paray made his American debut and sole Stadium appearance in a typically all-French concert, with Henry Merckel the soloist in Saint-Saëns's Third Violin Concerto.⁴¹ The critics were unanimous in their praise. As Bennett summed up in her rave review:

It is no easy task to select any one of the numbers for outstanding praise, so remarkable were his interpretations and so definitely was he in command of the members of the Philharmonic orchestra. From the opening measure of the Lalo work the audience realized that a master was directing the musicians. He revealed each and every phase of dramatic meaning suggested in the score and with the authority, breadth and intelligence of an informed and experienced musician.⁴²

The following season, German-born conductor William Steinberg, who had already made a name for himself in New York as a frequent conductor of the NBC Symphony Orchestra, first appeared at the Stadium in a succession of concerts. He commenced with an all-Tchaikovsky concert on 27 July

³⁹ Irving Kolodin, "Lily Pons Sings For Record Crowd," *The New York Sun*, 18 July 1939.

⁴⁰ Bernard Jacobson, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "André Kostelanetz." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁴¹ The program consisted of the following:

1. ÉDOUARD LALO: Overture, *Le Roi d'Ys*"
2. CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 3, in B minor
Mr. Merkel
3. PAUL DUKAS: *L'Apprenti Sorcier*

-INTERMISSION-

4. EMMANUEL CHABRIER: *Bourée Fantastique*
5. CLAUDE DEBUSSY: *Nocturnes*: "Nuages" and "Fêtes"
6. GABRIEL FAURÉ: *Pavane*, op. 50
7. MAURICE RAVEL: *La Valse*
8. HECTOR BERLIOZ: [Three Excerpts] From *The Damnation of Faust*, op. 24

⁴² Grena Bennett, "Stadium Debut Proves Paray Great Batonist," *New York Journal-American*, 25 July 1939.

1940 (the *Pathétique* Symphony, First Piano Concerto with Josef Lhevinne as soloist, and *Capriccio Italien*). For his second appearance the following night, he led the orchestra in a Beethoven-Wagner evening (the *Egmont* Overture, Fifth Symphony; Overture to *The Flying Dutchman*, Overture and Venusberg Music from *Tannhäuser*, and Overture to *Rienzi*). Then, after Smallens presided over the Stadium for the next four evenings, he led the orchestra for another four concerts. An anti-romanticist in his style of conducting, like Rodzinski and Reiner, Steinberg garnered this assessment from *The Times*'s Noel Straus: "Mr. Steinberg's interpretations were sincere, direct and authoritative; fervid, but absolutely without exaggerations or over-statement. And they were inevitably characterized by a compelling sense of design and architectural structure."⁴³ Steinberg conducted at the Stadium on a number of occasions during the next several seasons.

On 10 August 1941, Dean Dixon became the first and only African-American conductor ever to lead the Philharmonic at Lewisohn Stadium.⁴⁴ He programmed Berlioz's Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini*, Brahms's First Symphony, Bach's Arioso for Strings from Cantata no. 156, arranged by Sam Franko, Mendelssohn's Scherzo from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Liszt's *Les préludes*, as well as a new piece by Chinese-Hawaiian-American composer Dai-Keong Lee entitled *Prelude and Hula*. Dai-Keong and Dixon were friends who had met at Juilliard where they were both students.⁴⁵ The work inspired comparisons to Ravel's *Bolero* from at least one critic.⁴⁶ As for Dixon, the *Post*'s John Briggs opined in the following words: "It would be going too far to say that Mr. Dixon has leaped at a bound into the front rank of symphonic conductors. But at the same time, it would be hard to name a more promising contender. Mr. Dixon has his faults, but they are the faults of inexperience, not of incompetence."⁴⁷ The following summer, Dixon made two additional Stadium appearances, leading the orchestra in, among other works, the American premiere of Khatchaturian's First Symphony. He was never seen again at the Stadium after 1942.

Lastly, the 1944 season began with seven concerts led by Sir Thomas Beecham in his only Stadium engagement. The British conductor peppered his predominantly conservative programs somewhat with music by Sibelius (*En*

⁴³ Noel Straus, "Stadium Program All-Tchaikovsky," *The New York Times*, 28 July 1940.

⁴⁴ On 7 August 1965, Henry Lewis led members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in the summer's all-Gershwin concert.

⁴⁵ *The New York Times*, "Negro Conductor In Stadium Debut," 11 August 1941.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ John Briggs, "Dixon in Stadium Debut; Adler Saturday's Soloist," *New York Post*, 11 August 1941.

Saga and Second Symphony) and Delius (the Prelude to *Irmelin*), as well as Virgil Thomson's suite from his ballet, *Filling Station*. He also shared the stage with Fritz Kreisler in the opening concert and with his wife, pianist Betty Humby-Beecham, in his concluding presentation. Humby-Beecham did not receive the glowing notices that her husband and Kreisler enjoyed.⁴⁸

Other Conductors

Among those conductors who appeared at the Stadium during the war years, most notable were cult conductor and Mahler-Bruckner specialist, Jascha Horenstein, future Minneapolis and Detroit music director Antal Dorati, and Maurice Abravanel, best known for his long tenure at the helm of the Utah Symphony Orchestra. Horenstein led four concerts in 1943, eschewing Mahler and Bruckner entirely but taking on Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, and Barber's *Second Essay*, in addition to familiar masterworks. In 1944, the Hungarian Dorati accompanied a dance concert featuring Anton Dolin and Alicia Markova on 17 July, then, during the next two evenings, spiced up traditional fare with Bartok's "Peasant Dance" from *Two Images*, and Kodaly's *Hary Janos Suite*. Neither conductor appeared at the Stadium again following these appearances, but Abravanel, who accompanied Dolin and Markova on 28 July 1945 and led the orchestra in Milhaud's *Suite Française*; in the world premiere of the orchestral version, and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* Suite No. 2 the following night, conducted there on a number of occasions.

Three other important conductors were principal conductors during this period. Russian-born maestro Efrem Kurtz was a principal in a number of Stadium seasons beginning in 1939. He had short tenures in Kansas City and Houston before devoting his career to guest conducting, making a number of recordings along the way.⁴⁹ English composer-conductor Eugene Goossens, best known for his long tenure as music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, was a principal in 1941 and a guest conductor in 1945. Fabien Sevitzy was a guest in 1944, a principal in 1945, and a guest in 1946. He spent many years as music director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, which he developed from amateur to professional status. He was also a nephew of longtime Boston Symphony Orchestra music director,

⁴⁸ *The New York Times*, "Debut At Stadium By Lady Beecham," 26 June 1944. Jerome Moross's Symphony, scheduled for 24 June 1944, was replaced by Delius's *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* and Wagner's Bacchanale from *Tannhäuser*, when rain shortened the rehearsal and cancelled one of the seven concerts.

⁴⁹ Noel Goodwin, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd. ed., s.v. "Efrem Kurtz." London: Macmillan, 2001.

Serge Koussevitzky, who insisted that he change his last name to avoid confusion with the public.⁵⁰

Among the guest conductors during the World War II era were a number of more than passing interest. Frieder Weissmann, a guest in 1939 and 1940, was a German conductor who made a number of early recordings on the Parlophon label, mostly with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra.⁵¹ Charles O'Connell, a guest in 1939, was RCA Victor's musical director for a number of years.⁵² A third guest conductor in 1939, Carl Bamberger, was a Viennese conductor who taught at the Mannes College of Music, conducted the Philharmonic and at the New York City Opera and, after the war, made recordings in Germany.⁵³

The 1940 season featured a musical curio. Edwin McArthur was an American conductor and opera coach best known for his appearances in the concert hall and in the opera house with Norwegian soprano Kirsten Flagstad, about whom he later wrote a biography. He conducted her in an all-Wagner evening on 8 July 1940. The following evening, he led the Philharmonic in Philip James's Overture, *Bret Harte*, Charles W. Cadman's *American Suite* for Strings, Henry Gilbert's Prelude to the play by Synge, *Riders to the Sea*, and Deems Taylor's *Circus Day*. For his third appearance, McArthur offered Emerson Whithorne's *Sierra Morena*, Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Charles Loeffler's *Poem* ("To Eloise, My Wife"), and Vittorio Giannini's *An Opera Ballet*. Few Stadium conductors during this period did more for American music than did McArthur in these two concerts.⁵⁴

Hugh Ross, a guest conductor for the 23 June 1941 concert, was the long-time conductor of the Schola Cantorum and a faculty member of the Manhattan School of Music. His concert featured Griffes's *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla-Khan*, Enesco's Roumanian Rhapsody no. 1, and soloist Paul Robeson singing Mussorgsky's "Coronation" and "Death" scenes from *Boris Godunov*, William Grant Still's *And They Lynched Him on a Tree*, Earl Robinson's *Ballad for Americans*, and Gershwin's "It Ain't Necessarily So" from *Porgy and Bess*, as well as some spirituals.⁵⁵ Reginald Stewart, another guest in 1941, was, at the time, conductor of the Toronto Bach Choir and CBC Symphony Orchestra.⁵⁶ A third

⁵⁰ Brian Fredericksen, *Arnold Jacobs: Song and Wind* (WindSong Press Limited, 1996), 78.

⁵¹ Damian's 78s and early LPs, "Frieder Weissman," <http://www.damians78s.34sp.com/Conductor-Weissmann.html>.

⁵² *Time*, "Sour notes," <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,933732-1,00.html>.

⁵³ *The New York Times*, "Carl Bamberger," <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/full-page.html?res=9B0DE4D71E38F936A3575BC0A961948260>.

⁵⁴ Tim Page, "Edwin McArthur, Conductor and Accompanist, Dies at 79" <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DE1DF163FF936A15751C0A961948260>.

⁵⁵ Dennis Hevesi, "Hugh C. M. Ross Is Dead at 91; Conductor of Schola Cantorum," <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE5D7113DF932A15752C0A966958260>.

⁵⁶ The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Stewart, Reginald," <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/>

guest conductor that year, Herman Adler, enjoyed long tenures at the helms of the NBC Opera and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.⁵⁷ Lastly, Ignace Strasfogel, a guest in 1944, was resident conductor of the Metropolitan Opera Company for over two decades and head of the opera department at the Curtis Institute of Music.⁵⁸

It was during this period in Stadium history that operetta evenings were first held. These concerts, either complete operettas in concert form or highlights from various works, offered Stadium audiences opportunities to hear a genre that was already past its prime, replaced by the modern Broadway musical popularized by Oscar Hammerstein and Richard Rodgers. Three conductors during this period led the proceedings. Of the three, Franz Allers was the only one who became a frequent Stadium conductor, often of light music and dance concerts, as well as of full-fledged symphonic concerts. He later conducted the 24 June 1961, 10 July 1962 and 4 July 1963 all-Gershwin concerts following Alexander Smallens's retirement from the podium. A Czech-born conductor, he was best known as the musical director for Lerner and Loewe's most successful musicals, including *Brigadoon*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Camelot*.⁵⁹ Another operetta evening leader was Robert Stolz, an Austrian conductor and composer who immigrated to America in 1940 and stayed until 1952, when he returned to Vienna. Best known for his operetta, *Der Tans in Glück* (1920), he was an annual conductor of Viennese operetta nights from 1942 to 1950. The only season in which he appeared more than once was 1942, when he conducted two nights of Johann Strauss Jr.'s *The Gypsy Baron* on 6 and 7 August. Stolz was the composer of sixty-five operettas and an estimated one hundred film scores.⁶⁰ Finally, Sigmund Romberg was another annual conductor of operetta nights from 1945 to 1951. A Hungarian-born composer of operettas who made the transition to American musical comedy in the twenties, his best-known works were the operettas *The Student Prince* (1924) and *The Desert Song*, and the musicals *The New Moon* (1928) and *Up in Central Park* (1945).⁶¹ Unlike Stolz, Romberg featured operetta excerpts and light fare from worldwide composers,

index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0003943.

⁵⁷ John Rockwell, "Peter Herman Adler; TV Opera Pioneer And Conductor, 91," <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CEFD6143EF930A35753C1A966958260>.

⁵⁸ *The New York Times*, "Ignace Strasfogel, 84, Pianist and Conductor," <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C03E0DC1538F933A25751C0A962958260>.

⁵⁹ *The New York Times*, "Franz Allers, 89, a Conductor And Broadway Musical Director," <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=990CE0DC1F3BF93BA15752C0A963958260>.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Forbes, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd. ed., s.v. "Robert Forbes." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁶¹ William A. Everett, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Sigmund Romberg." London: Macmillan, 2001.

not just Austrian, while emphasizing his own music first and foremost. Another film composer, Max Steiner, conducted the Frank Sinatra night on 3 August 1943. Viennese-born, Steiner moved to America in 1914 where he worked on Broadway, then moved to Hollywood in 1929, and scored such movies as *King Kong* (1933), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), and *Now, Voyager* (1942), among many others.⁶² Other Stadium conductors from 1939 to 1945 included, in alphabetical order: Howard Barlow, Josef Blant, Emil Cooper, Morton Gould, Alexander Hilsberg, Werner Josten, and Mois Zlatin.

Lastly, on 25 and 26 July 1940, the Philharmonic yielded the Stadium stage to the All-American Youth Orchestra led by the flamboyant maestro, Leopold Stokowski in his first Stadium appearances. The ensemble was one of a number of young musicians' orchestras led by Stokowski, sometimes without compensation, after his retirement from the helm of the Philadelphia Orchestra (1912-1936). The orchestra debuted under Stokowski several days earlier in Atlantic City, performed in Baltimore and Washington, then made its way to the City College campus before undertaking a "good will tour" through South America.⁶³ At Lewisohn Stadium, Stokowski placed the wind instruments forward and the strings to the rear; he led the youthful corps in music by Bach's Fugue in G minor, ("The Shorter") in his own transcription, Brahms's First Symphony, Gardner Read's Prelude and Toccata, op. 43, and Wagner's "Love Music" from *Tristan and Isolde*, once again in his own transcription. Three encores followed, one of which was the complete Ravel's *Boléro*.⁶⁴ The following concert, more adventurous in content, consisting of La Salle Spier's *Impressions of the Bowery*, Henry Cowell's *Pastoral* and *Fiddler's Delight*, Stokowski's own transcriptions of Albéniz's "Fiesta en Sevilla" and Debussy's "Night in Granada," followed by Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, had to be moved to the Great Hall due to rain.⁶⁵

Not all of the New York critics were impressed with Stokowski's flexible and mannered approach to the more familiar compositions.⁶⁶ Perhaps they took their cue from Toscanini, who was often referred to as "The Servant of the Composer" even though Toscanini made almost as many alterations to scores as did Stokowski.⁶⁷ But Toscanini accepted and gloried in his not-very-deserved reputation. Stokowski, on the other hand, made no secret that he had

⁶² Kate Daubney (with Janet B. Bradford), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Max Steiner." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁶³ *The New York Times*, "Stokowski Conducts in Atlantic City," 22 July 1940.

⁶⁴ Pitts Sanborn, "Stokowski's Orchestra at Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 26 July 1940.

⁶⁵ *The New York Sun*, "Youth Orchestra Plays Farewell," 27 July 1940.

⁶⁶ Jerome D. Bohm, "Stokowski Off With Orchestra After Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 July 1940.

⁶⁷ Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 263.

no interest in authenticity. Like Maazel, he stamped scores with his personality and sometimes made huge alterations, creating in Philadelphia an orchestra that made every composer sound like he came from Philadelphia, a tradition that continued under his successor, Eugene Ormandy. To achieve this “Philadelphia Sound,” in Philly or elsewhere, Stokowski used free-bowing for the strings and staggered breathing for the winds, among other things.

Repertoire

The symphonic repertoire at Lewisohn Stadium during the World War II era was not dramatically different from that of the previous decades. As mentioned earlier, Wagner and Richard Strauss were not ignored though performed less often, while Stadium audiences were treated to healthy doses of Beethoven, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky. The annual Gershwin concert remained highly popular. During these six seasons, Russian music was highly dominant, reflecting America’s solidarity with one of her allies as well as perhaps the left’s affinity with Soviet Russia.⁶⁸ Shostakovich and Khatchaturian were performed more often during this era than during any of the following eras. While numerous all-Russian concerts were given during this period, only one all-American show was presented each summer: the annual all-Gershwin concert.

A decent if not huge amount of American music was presented during World War II, with no composer surfacing to challenge Gershwin’s elite Stadium status, no concerts featuring only American composers given, and no search for another great American composer undertaken. Give or take several minor exceptions, that which was performed eschewed patriotic wartime sentiment. Then as now, American composers were more hesitant to compose works of pro-war (or pro-American) sentiment than were their European compatriots and most of the comparatively few works that do so have not survived in the repertoire. Oscar Thompson summed up this issue in the *New York Sun*:

Aside from sundry patriotic airs sung chiefly by school children, America has no music that can be regarded as serving a propaganda purpose like that of the Shostakovich “May Day” symphony or other examples to be found in the art music of the Soviets. Composition by or for a creed has been of little interest or concern to our musicians or our public, with the rather negligible exceptions of the left wingers of some choral bodies more interested in the class struggle than in music. In most of the talk about Americanism in music that has been going on now for more than half a century, the issue has been one of American melodic roots, Ameri-

⁶⁸ British music of past and present was largely ignored. England’s status as one of our allies was not enough to rescue its music from neglect.

can rhythms and American harmonic or instrumental coloring, not American ideology. Composers, critics and others have debated the matter of American subjects for stage works, symphonies, overtures and the like, but for the sake of the story, the sentiment, the romance or the background, rather than because of world outlook or national habit of thought.⁶⁹

Politics and ideologies aside, the relative neglect of American music in or out of the Stadium was (and is) regrettable. Frequent Stadium conductor Alexander Smallens, himself somewhat guilty of this neglect, expressed his disgust of this trend:

It is a tragedy that American composers and conductors have been hampered so long by the combination of snobbery and ignorance which has been responsible for the very silly notion that, in art, if it's foreign it's good, or at least better than the local product.

As for me, I'd far rather listen to home-made mediocrities than foreign ones, if I have to listen to mediocrities at all. Why must our ears be stuffed with the output of second or third-rate foreign composers, presented under mediocre foreign conductors, at the expense of our local composing and conducting talent? Genius, of course knows no national boundaries, and none should be allowed to interfere with its functioning. Bring over all the Toscaninis you can get to come here. When it is a question of really great talent, the more you can get the better for music in general. But there has been too much sacrificing of our local talents in favor of those from abroad which are certainly not superior, and in many cases are definitely inferior.

There is no country in the world where native musical abilities are so spurned as in America, while opportunities are given foreign importations all the time.⁷⁰

Perhaps Minnie Guggenheimer's earlier-quoted words sum up best the prevailing sentiment at the Stadium from 1939 to 1945: "With Europe darkened by intolerance, divided by hate, America must accept the role of civilization's trustee." The canon as it evolves must be performed and emphasized over the inevitable minor fare of past and present. The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts were set in motion to present to as many listeners as possible the finest music at low prices. Why American composers have produced less that has yet to join the canon compared to the Europeans is an issue beyond the realm of this study. Even so, the domination of European (particularly Russian) music over American music during an era in which American nationalism was perhaps at

⁶⁹ Oscar Thompson, "Novelties for the Stadium," *The New York Sun*, 22 June 1940.

⁷⁰ William G. King, "Music and Musicians: Alexander Smallens Has His Say on Raw Deal for Americans," *The New York Sun*, 24 June 1939.

its highest is most curious. The Stadium Concerts had done more for American music during its previous several decades—even with the Depression—and could conceivably have presented at least one all-American concert during this period besides the annual Gershwin concert. Nonetheless, its continuing commitment to the canon with the occasional forays into new American music remained admirable, as was the willingness of so many New Yorkers to support the endeavor during one of America's most trying times.

Contemporary and Recent European Music

As mentioned earlier, Shostakovich was performed at the Stadium more often during the World War II era than during the years that followed. His First Symphony, which was introduced to Stadium audiences by Smallens on 8 July 1937 and performed twice in 1938, received an additional twelve hearings between 1939 and 1948, and was last performed at the Stadium on 13 July 1961. The work was not heard between 1948 and 1961. Similarly, the Fifth Symphony was heard for the first time on 19 June 1942 in an all-Russian music program led by Rodzinski and was performed six more times, the last time on the 23 July 1959 concert after a hiatus of nine seasons. The 19 June 1942 concert, entitled by *The New York Times* as a tribute to the Soviet Union,⁷¹ also featured the only Stadium performance of Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto, with Private Eugene List as the soloist.

The symphony was better received than the concerto. Taubman commented that the concerto “grows on one with repeated hearings” while the Fifth “does not wear out its welcome. The composer knows how to sustain the grand line.”⁷² Francis D. Perkins wrote of the concerto:

It is not great, and not always distinguished music, but its supply of melodies is liberal and engaging as well as varied; there is frank tuneful romanticism as well as jaunty and effective humor and high spirits. The scoring has deftness and color and various orchestral instruments, especially in the brass choir, take their turn with the piano in solo roles.⁷³

This last comment of Perkins's is curious, for the piano concerto calls only for piano, strings and a solo trumpet. The *Brooklyn Eagle's* Miles Kastendieck proclaimed that the symphony “in its entirety proclaims a composer who has

⁷¹ Howard Taubman, “Concert Tribute To Soviet Union,” *The New York Times*, 20 June 1942.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Francis D. Perkins, “Eugene List Starts His Recital A Private, Ends It a Corporal,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 20 June 1942.

made a distinct contribution to the music of his time.”⁷⁴

The 19 June 1942 concert had two notable asides. After the concerto, List was promoted to the rank of Corporal by Captain Samuel Russell, who led List's unit. Russell stated that the promotion “was not because of your outstanding ability as a pianist but because you are a good soldier.”⁷⁵ After serving in the army during World War II, List continued a notable career as a concert pianist. In addition, in an occurrence that would be frequently repeated during the waning years of the Stadium, Rodzinski was forced to stop in the middle of the *Largo* of the Fifth Symphony when a noisy airplane flew overhead.⁷⁶

Along with the First and Fifth Symphonies and the sole performance of the First Piano Concerto, other Shostakovich works heard at the Stadium were ballet pieces from *The Golden Age* (in particular, the mischievous *Polka*), and the first movement of his famed *Leningrad Symphony*. The latter work was conducted by Efrem Kurtz in a symphonic concert on 11 July 1944 and by Franz Allers on 1 July 1945 in a concert devoted mostly to dance. Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony received a single Stadium hearing on 21 June 1955 under the direction of New York Philharmonic music director Dmitri Mitropoulos, who with the same orchestra made a still highly-regarded recording of the work in 1954.

Shostakovich's Armenian colleague Aram Khatchaturian enjoyed three Stadium hearings in 1942 as well. On 10 July, Dean Dixon conducted the American premiere of his First Symphony. Eight days later, Efrem Kurtz and Willam Kapell teamed up to perform his Piano Concerto. Two days afterwards, Kurtz led the orchestra in the American premiere of several movements from his *Dance Suite*.

The Concerto pleased the critics more than the Symphony. As Jerome Bohm wrote in the *Herald Tribune*:

The Khatchaturian Symphony, which is in three movements, is a highly eclectic product which makes some use of autochthonous [*sic*] Armenian material but for the most part utilizes neo-romantic Russian clichés familiar in the works of such composers as Rimsky-Korsakoff, Moussorgsky, Glière and others of this school. It is richly and effectively orchestrated, making considerable use of the piano, but I discovered no instrumental combinations to lend the scoring distinction.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Miles Kastendieck, “Rodzinski Turns to Music Of Two Soviet Composers,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, 20 June 1942.

⁷⁵ Howard Taubman, “Concert Tribute To Soviet Union,” *The New York Times*, 20 June 1942.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Jerome D. Bohm, “Dixon Directs Two New Works At the Stadium,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 July 1942.

Other critics were also cool to the Symphony, Taubman writing that “the work is too long for its content; it has not enough variety.”⁷⁸ The Concerto elicited the following from Louis Biancolli:

The work at times resorts unabashedly to theatrical devices, but so do the Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff concertos.

Khatchaturian knows his public. He pours out lush harmonies by the yard and builds up terrific climaxes. Warm folkish melodies gush through the scheme, and the whole knits into a dramatic scheme with real symphonic punch. The Armenian flashes highlight the material.⁷⁹

Following this flurry of Stadium performances, Khatchaturian was heard less often at the Stadium. Dances from his ballet *Gayaneh* were performed six more times while his still-popular Violin Concerto received its New York premiere at the Stadium on 4 August 1949, with Carroll Glen (Eugene List’s wife) as the soloist and Efreim Kurtz the conductor.

Interestingly, Prokofiev was less frequently played than the two earlier-mentioned Soviet composers; his popular *Classical Symphony* and music from his orchestral suite from his opera *The Love of Three Oranges* usually took the stage. Other compositions slowly found their way to the Stadium during its later years.

Somewhat grating on the ears was Alexander Mossolov’s modernist *Steel Foundry*, conducted by Weissman on 19 July 1939. The *New York Mirror*’s James Whittaker opined, “It still sounds so much like a steel-mill that the zoning laws ought to restrict performance in this country to Hudson County and South Bend, Indiana.”⁸⁰ Bennett chimed in, describing the short Mossolov piece as “a noisy, blantant [*sic*] and monotonous imitation of the sounds that assault the ears in a place described in the title.”⁸¹

Other notable Soviet composer performed at the Stadium during the war years include Tikhon Khrennikov and Dmitri Kabalevsky. The former, perhaps better known today for his many spars with Shostakovich and other Soviet composers as head of the U.S.S.R. Composers’ Union than for his music, was represented by his First Symphony in a 16 July 1942 program led by Kurtz. The latter’s Second Symphony was performed by Kostelanetz and the orchestra on 28 June 1945, while his popular overture to his opera *Colas Breugnon* received numerous Stadium hearings during the final two decades.

⁷⁸ Howard Taubman, “Dean Dixon Gives Stadium Program,” *The New York Times*, 11 July 1942.

⁷⁹ Louis Biancolli, “Khatchaturian Concerto Heard,” *New York Daily Telegram*, 20 July 1942.

⁸⁰ James Whittaker, “Steel Foundry Rivals Imagery At the Stadium,” *New York Mirror*, 20 July 1939.

⁸¹ Grena Bennett, “Johnson’s ‘Imagery’ Suite Has Hearing at the Stadium,” *New York Journal-American*, 20 July 1939.

Lastly, the Don Cossack Russian Chorus sang traditional songs and some classical standards in four programs throughout the forties. As was the case with the Hall Johnson Negro Choir, the Russians performed during the second half of concerts after the Philharmonic vacated the stage. While Russians of past and present highlighted the Stadium Concerts of the World War II era, other notable compositions from England and other European countries were heard as well. On 12 July 1939, Stadium audiences were introduced to the twenty-six-year-old British composer Benjamin Britten, represented on a Stadium program conducted by Frieder Weissmann by his *Variations on a Theme by Frank Bridge* in its New York premiere. Pitts Sanborn wrote of Britten's work for strings:

The variations are fanciful, ingenious[*sic*], technically proficient and well calculated not to annoy anybody who finds ultramodernism offensive. Particularly pleasing last evening were the Adagio variation, the Aria Italiana, and the movements in which the waltz rhythm is employed.⁸²

Two years later, Alexander Smallens led the orchestra in the New York premiere of Britten's *Soirées Musicales*, which elicited the following remark from Jerome Bohm:

Mr. Britten's arrangements of the March, Canzonetta, Tyrolese, Bolero, which compose his suite, are effectively scored and the English composer had the good taste to preserve Rossini's harmonic idiom not resorting to piquancies à la Stravinsky, as have most of his recent associates in devising similar orchestral adaptations of the Italian master's music.⁸³

On 29 June 1941, Smallens led the orchestra in Sibelius's still rarely heard Third Symphony. *The New York Times's* Noel Straus noted that the Third represented the Finn's first foray into anti-romanticism, yet found the work inferior to later Sibelius symphonies and its relative neglect understandable.⁸⁴

Rain lowered the attendance for the 3 August 1939 Swiss Night at Lewisohn Stadium, which combined fifes, drummers, dancers and yodelers with music by Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, Hans Huber, Fritz Brun, Jean Binet, Gustave Doret, and Artur Honegger (*Pacific 231*, not too surprisingly).⁸⁵

American Music

In terms of American music, these six seasons were notable for the advocacy of three important composers and a handful of lesser lights, several

⁸² Pitts Sanborn, "Music Work New to City Played Here," *New York World-Telegram*, 13 July 1939.

⁸³ Jerome D. Bohm, "Smallens Leads Varied Concert At the Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 25 June 1941.

⁸⁴ Noel Straus, "Work of Sibelius Heard At Stadium," *The New York Times*, 30 June 1941.

⁸⁵ Pitts Sanborn, "Gala Swiss Night Delightful Program," *New York Daily Telegram*, 4 August 1939.

of whom blended leftist politics with the concert hall.

Three Important Composers

By the time America entered the war, Aaron Copland was well-established as a composer of and commentator on classical music. In the nine years since his modernist Piano Concerto was first heard at the Stadium, the Brooklyn-born composer had embraced a milder style that incorporated folk songs and hymns and did not shy away from jazz but did not emphasize it either.

In 1939, two Copland works were heard at Lewisohn Stadium for the first time. On 4 July of that year, Smallens led the Philharmonic-Symphony in Copland's *An Outdoor Overture*. Perkins wrote of the overture, "Despite a few measures in which musical interest seemed unevenly sustained, the work can be generally well commended for its musical ideas and their development, as well as for its instrumental investiture."⁸⁶ Eleven days later, Frieder Weissman gave the Stadium premiere of *El Salon Mexico*. In 1941, two new Copland creations were given their Stadium debuts. The orchestral suite from the ballet *Billy the Kid* was heard for the first time in New York on 20 June under the direction of Smallens. Of this piece, Straus wrote:

It was knowingly and imaginatively scored and American in essence, despite the fact that many of its pages found the composer under the spell of Ravel and Stravinsky.

Expertly devised for ballet purposes, the numbers brought together in the suite lost something of their effectiveness when heard as pure music, the impression of the excerpts as a whole being rather uneven and fragmentary.⁸⁷

Copland's chamber orchestra work, *Quiet City*, was performed on 8 August, again led by Smallens. Bennett wrote that the piece "illustrates the composer's invention in tonal combinations, color and mood and, moreover, an aptitude for subtle and impressive effects in orchestration." She also had praise for Philharmonic principal trumpeter William Vacchiano's rendering of the solo trumpet part.⁸⁸ Lastly, *A Lincoln Portrait* for speaker and orchestra was heard at the Stadium for the first time on 26 July 1943. André Kostelanetz conducted and famed poet Carl Sandburg narrated. All five of these Copland compositions were programmed at least one additional time at the Stadium.

⁸⁶ Francis D. Perkins, "Stadium Crowd Hears Music of 3 New Yorkers," *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 July 1939.

⁸⁷ Noel Straus, "'Cotillon' Novelty Heard At Stadium," *The New York Times*, 21 June 1941.

⁸⁸ Grena Bennett, "Emphasizes Patriotism," *New York Journal-American*, 9 August 1941.



Figure 18: Igor Stravinsky rehearses with the Stadium Symphony Orchestra in 1962.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-047-01-003). Photo Bert Bial.

Like his slightly older contemporary, Gershwin, Copland was a Rubin Goldmark student. Unlike Gershwin, Copland was accepted by Nadia Boulanger as a student. Boulanger refused Gershwin because, like Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Ravel, among others, she did not want to tamper with Gershwin's approach to composition. They all believed that Gershwin was an already mature composer. Did Boulanger feel otherwise about Copland? Hard to say, given that Boulanger greatly aided Copland's career by arranging the premieres of his first important work, the *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra* (1924), the piece ultimately performed in New York under Damrosch and in Boston under Koussevitzky. But Copland did become a very popular composer even if he did not sell out the Stadium as did Gershwin often.

Though a confirmed socialist who later faced Joseph McCarthy but never was blacklisted, Copland was devoted to pursuing a distinctly American music nonetheless. This inclination stemmed partly from a desire to be the great American composer, but also to further his political vision for the nation as a whole. As he stated at the end of his Norton Lectures in 1952, "The artist should feel himself affirmed and buoyed by his community. In other words, art and the life of art must mean something, in the deepest sense, to the everyday

citizen. When that happens, America will have achieved a maturity to which every sincere artist will have contributed.’⁸⁹ One can read in these words the desire to reach with music Americans from all walks of life, something which can be applauded even though there are places for music that arguably does not do so. One can also detect sentiments that motivated the doctrine of socialist realism that made life difficult for his Soviet contemporary Dmitri Shostakovich, among many others of his countrymen.

During the World War II era, William Schuman was looked upon as a potential major composer, achieving fame by writing works aimed for performances by young people and amateurs. This phase in his career took place at roughly the same time as when Copland turned populist and for very much the same reasons. As Schuman told one reporter at the time:

American composers have finally come down from their “ivy towers” and are really producing living music for living people. . . . They have learned they can achieve more success for themselves and for the common good of American music by pulling together than by boosting their own works. . . . With over 30,000 high schools maintaining symphony orchestras averaging fifty musicians each, our immediate tasks to urge American composers to write music for American youths, in an idiom they can feel and play emotionally and successfully.⁹⁰

Inspired by a 1930 Toscanini concert to pursue serious composition rather than continue to write popular music, Schuman, unlike Copland, spent many years in academia, most notably as President of the Juilliard School of Music. Two large-scale choral works were performed at Lewisohn Stadium during this era: *Prologue with Chorus* (4 July 1939) and *This Is Our Time* (4 July 1940). Both works featured texts of social consciousness written by left-wing poet, Genevieve Taggard, Schuman’s colleague at Sarah Lawrence College, where both taught at the time. The former work was sung by the chorus from the High School of Music and Art, the latter by the Peoples’ Philharmonic Choral Society, described by Oscar Thompson as “a workers’ group of about 200 voices”.⁹¹ The first piece was well-received:

Mr. Schuman’s “Prologue” would have benefited by an immediate repetition. Written to words of Genevieve Taggard, it is virile, short, striking and the sort of work which needs a little mulling over.⁹²

Biancolli described *Prologue* as “rugged, percussively insistent music

⁸⁹ Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: the Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 270.

⁹⁰ Steve Swayne, *Orpheus in Manhattan: William Schuman and the Shaping of America’s Musical Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 132.

⁹¹ Oscar Thompson, “Schuman Cantata Heard At Stadium,” *The New York Sun*, 5 July 1940.

⁹² *New York Post*, “Smallens Plays American Works,” 6 July 1939.

over a driving belligerent beat. The choral passages weave into the fabric dramatically."⁹³ The work found favor with the audience⁹⁴ but failed to hold in the Stadium repertoire. As for the High School Chorus's reception, the students cheered when they heard that they were to perform at the Stadium. But when one student queried, "You mean the Yankee Stadium?" the others answered, "Naw, the Lewisohn, ya dope!"⁹⁵

Similarly, *This Is Our Time* was only heard once at the Stadium. Longer than *Prologue*, the work is in five sections: "Celebration," "Work," "Foundations," "Questions," and "Fanfares," and begins with the words, "This is our time/we celebrate our time in song." The more ambitious choral composition met with less critical success. As Straus wrote:

Obviously the 30-year-old composer, who had done far better in his earlier and much briefer "Prologue," was not yet ready to tackle a work of the proportions of this cantata. The vocal line was jerky, broken and spasmodic. There were few contrasts of mood or tempo, and the general impression given by the melancholy pervading the score was that "Our time" is not one to "celebrate" happily "in song." But the excellent performance of the novelty brought a big hand, necessitating bows from the composer and both directors.⁹⁶

Perkins found more to praise:

At times the cantata might also have profited by more variety of pace and a wider range of harmonic color, although in the latter regard the work was well written within its limits, showing notable knowledge of the resources of the orchestra as well as of the chorus. But, despite drawbacks, the work spoke well of Mr. Schuman as an American composer of whom much can be expected and who does not eschew frank and communicative emotional expression.⁹⁷

Schuman never again had a choral work performed at the Stadium; the above works were perhaps intriguing in sentiment but somewhat short of the mark in musical impact. He himself joined with such composers-colleagues as Colin McPhee in later dismissing *This is Our Time*, declaring, "I do not regard it as one of my most successful compositions."⁹⁸ Schuman did, however, enjoy frequent performances of his *American Festival Overture* and several performances

⁹³ Louis Biancolli, "Stadium Honors Composers," *New York World-Telegram*, 5 July 1940.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Swayne, *Orpheus*, 128.

⁹⁶ Noel Straus, "Stadium Premiere For New Cantata," *The New York Times*, 5 July 1940.

⁹⁷ Francis D. Perkins, "Music for the Fourth," *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 July 1940.

⁹⁸ Swayne, *Orpheus*, 131.

of his light tone poem, *Newsreel—In Five Shots*, the revised version of which was premiered at the Stadium and dedicated to Smallens, who directed both of the above choral works. Curiously, his Third Symphony, a work largely responsible for his reputation as a leading American composer of his time, was never heard at the Stadium. Schuman also had the distinction of winning the first ever Pulitzer Prize for music (*Free Song*, 1942.)⁹⁹

Lastly, several of Samuel Barber's compositions appeared on Stadium programs during these years.¹⁰⁰ On 28 June 1939, his famed *Adagio for Strings* received its first-ever performance before a paying audience at the Stadium under the direction of Massimo Freccia.¹⁰¹ Perkins waxed effusive, stating that the performance "confirmed the very favorable impression created by this music last fall, one of sensitiveness, imagination and masterly treatment of the instrumental medium."¹⁰² *The New York Sun's* Irving Kolodin was less enthusiastic, however, commenting that "it is difficult to find in its measured patterns a reflection of contemporary musical development. Indeed, its most arresting quality is its pronounced conservatism."¹⁰³ It was not the last time that Barber was taken to task for his "conservatism." But Kolodin's reservations notwithstanding, the *Adagio* was performed seven more times at the Stadium. Other Barber works heard at the Stadium during the World War II era were the *Second Essay for Orchestra*, conducted by Jascha Horenstein on 25 July 1943, and the *Commando March*, conducted by Smallens on 28 June 1944.

All three of these important composers performed at Lewisohn Stadium during this time have their advocates among listeners, musicians and critics, but have yet to be the institutions that Gershwin was during his much shorter lifetime. Neither they nor anyone else can claim to be the box office success that Gershwin was and may still be, although, like Gershwin, Copland and Barber did transcend the concert hall into more mainstream entertainment. Both men's music can be heard in a number of motion picture scores, for example, even though neither composer entered the popular music scene as did Gershwin.

Other Notable American Compositions

⁹⁹ Bruce Saylor, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "William Schuman." London: Macmillan, 2001.

¹⁰⁰ The first Stadium performance of a work by Barber took place on 28 July 1937, when George King Raudenbush led the Philharmonic-Symphony in his *Music for a Scene from Shelley*.

¹⁰¹ Francis D. Perkins, "Massimo Freccia Closes Symphony Engagement," *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 June 1939. The *Adagio for Strings* in its version for string orchestra was first heard in an NBC Symphony Orchestra radio broadcast on 5 November 1938, conducted by Arturo Toscanini.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Irving Kolodin, "Freccia's Farewell," *The New York Sun*, 29 June 1939.

On 25 June 1940, perhaps the most “American” of the Stadium Concerts of the World War Two era was heard. The concert, which had been scheduled for a day earlier but was postponed due to rain, attracted great interest from outside Manhattan—Eleanor Roosevelt was among the many who attended¹⁰⁴—and one of the Stadium’s largest audiences of the season. The concert, described by some papers as having “Democracy” as its theme, featured two world premieres for chorus and orchestra; a recent work and spirituals, featuring baritone soloist Paul Robeson; and several European compositions: the Largo from Dvorak’s *New World* Symphony and Weinberger’s *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree: Variations and Fugue on an Old English Tune*. Rodzinski led the first half of the concert and Mark Warnow undertook the second.

The first Lewisohn world premiere, Roy Harris’s *Challenge, 1940*, opened the concert in stirring fashion. The chorus-orchestra piece, with a brief baritone solo, sung on this occasion by chorister Peter Nicolaeff, is a setting of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States. The critics found much to praise about the work, but felt that the chorus, made up of members of the Schola Cantorum, needed more rehearsal.¹⁰⁵ Jerome Bohm’s review summed up Harris’s piece: “The song is plaintive in character, simply melodious and of direct appeal, as is indeed the whole of the composition. The instrumentation is especially telling.”¹⁰⁶ This work may have been one example of the kind of “American subject” referred to in Oscar Thompson’s earlier-mentioned editorial.

Harris’s composition may have also been a patriotic counterbalance to a second premiere on the program.¹⁰⁷ Heard after the spiritual-influenced Dvorak was African American composer William Grant Still’s cantata *And They Lynched Him on a Tree*. Set to a text by Katherine Garrison Chapin, the performance of the cantata was summed up by Chapin:

[It is] a human document sung in the rhythmic expression of poetry through music and thence to the hearts of people. It is the heart, the intelligence, that overcomes and eliminates intolerance and the blow of intolerance upon the land.

It is night. In a clearing by the roadside among the turpentine pines, lit by the headlights from parked cars, a Negro has just been lynched. The white crowd who hung him, and those who watched, are breaking up now, go-

¹⁰⁴ *The New York Times*, “Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt To Be Concert Guest,” 24 June 1940.

¹⁰⁵ Grena Bennett, “New American Compositions On Stadium Bill,” *New York Journal-American*, 26 June 1940.

¹⁰⁶ Jerome D. Bohm, “‘Democracy’ Is Concert Theme At the Stadium,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 June 1940.

¹⁰⁷ Wayne D. Shirley, “William Grant Still’s Choral Ballad ‘And They Lynched Him on a Tree,’” *American Music* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 447.

ing home. They sing together, get into their cars and drive away. Darkness falls on the road and the woods. Then slowly the Negroes come out from hiding to find the body of their friend. Among them is the mother of the man who was hung. In darkness they grope for the tree; when they find it the mother sings her dirge. The Negro chorus joins her and they retell the story of the man's life and rehearse the tragedy. She is humble and broken but as they all sing together, white voices joining the Negroes, the song becomes strong in its protest against mob lawlessness and pleads for a new tolerance to wipe this shadow of injustice off the land.¹⁰⁸

In this work, the Wen Talbert Negro Choir joined with the Schola Cantorum, and Louise Burge, very well-received, sang the solo contralto part. Bohm wrote that the cantata, "contains some stirring pages, more especially those dealing with the sentiments of the Negroes concerned in its unfolding" but commented that "Mr. Still's instrumentation seemed at times too weak for an outdoor concert."¹⁰⁹ The *New York Post* hailed the Still as "a powerful essay against mob violence,"¹¹⁰ while Howard Taubman stated, "Mr. Still has written with utter simplicity and with deep feeling. He has used the orchestra to paint in the atmosphere of the evening. A few harsh, cruel chords evoke the brutal crowd."¹¹¹

The story of Still's choral ballad and its Stadium premiere formed as compelling a tale as that of any Stadium premiere. The project was initiated by Harlem Renaissance poet Alain Locke and one of the movement's major sponsors, Charlotte Mason.¹¹² It was also a timely project; in January of 1940, the Gavagan Anti-Lynching Bill was passed in Congress.¹¹³ Several major conductors, Fritz Reiner and Rodzinski, expressed interest in the leading the premiere, with Rodzinski winning the day, while Still's Rochester champion Howard Hanson promised a future performance as well.¹¹⁴ Some intrigue occurred as Rodzinski, weeks before the Stadium concert, expressed concern about the work's somber ending. His concern stemmed in part due to the political tensions of the time as well as his fears that his niece and his sister-in-law might not be allowed to emigrate to America (Chapin's husband, the Solicitor General, intervened

¹⁰⁸ *New York Daily Worker*, "Robeson Sings 'Ballad' At Stadium, June 24," 29 May 1940.

¹⁰⁹ Jerome D. Bohm, "'Democracy' Is Concert Theme At the Stadium," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 26 June 1940.

¹¹⁰ *New York Post*, "Robeson Heard by 13,000 At the Lewisohn Stadium," 26 June 1940.

¹¹¹ Howard Taubman, "American Music Heard In Stadium," *The New York Times*, 26 June 1940.

¹¹² Shirley, "William Grant Still" 425.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 435.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

before the concert).¹¹⁵ Even so, Chapin changed the final words of the text to something more optimistic. This new text was printed in the program but the original text was sung with nobody in the press or the audience noticing.¹¹⁶ Marian Anderson was sought for the role of the victim's mother but balked over the fee.¹¹⁷ Ms. Burge was enlisted instead.

While some American works premiered at Lewisohn Stadium may deserve their neglect, Still's *And They Lynched Him on a Tree* is not one of them. Its only flaw besides the large forces needed for performance is the lack of any memorable musical theme. But the choral ballad, which pleasingly combines Hanson's conservative idiom with African-American spirituals, is quite compelling and repays with repeated listening. The piece starts with jittery music which expertly captures the mix of triumph and nervousness the white mob feels after the lynching. The music for the victim's mother is melancholy yet controlled; her son did commit murder, hence his just incarceration. The work concludes with aptly tense music, reflecting the fact that racial tensions still exist (the final F minor chord is elongated by an extended G, indicated that things remain unresolved). It would be nice if this and other Still works were performed more often, what with so few Black American works having been accepted into the canon, regardless of whether they, like this composition, deal with terrible social injustice.

Also on the program was *Ballad for Americans*, with music by later-blacklisted composer Earl Robinson and a text by John Latouche, which was something of a popular piece, already much recorded, which Paul Robeson made a personal specialty, his unique voice having helped mold the piece into its definitive shape, harmonically and otherwise.¹¹⁸ The work was a plea for tolerance for all races, for an America without boundaries. Somewhat less directly, it was also a plea for socialism. The work combines a summary of American history up until that point in time while acknowledging that much work remained to be done to make the nation truly welcome for all. It also involved Robeson speaking back and forth with chorus members as well as singing from all parties, Robeson eventually stating that he was all of the people in the shadows after being asked repeatedly by chorus members who he is. As an interesting side-note, *Ballad* was requested by the Republicans for their 1940 convention in Philadelphia, but

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 439-43.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 445.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Lisa Barg, "Paul Robeson's *Ballad for Americans*: Race and the Cultural Politics of 'People's Music'," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 1 (2008): 27-70. In her article, Barg incorrectly asserts that the 25 June 1940 concert featured Robeson's Stadium debut. As mentioned earlier, the baritone first appeared at the Stadium on 31 July 1932 (see pp. 119).

Robeson declined, partly for political reasons, in favor of the Stadium concert which took place that same night.¹¹⁹ *Ballad for Americans* was performed every summer at the Stadium from 1940 to 1943, after which it vanished from the Stadium repertoire. The Still was heard again in 1941 at the Stadium, the Harris never again. It was a telling measure of the power of American democracy that, in a “Democracy-themed” concert put on amidst the winds of war, there were several works that expressed criticism of America at its worst rather than praise for America at its best.

Still was not the only African-American composer heard at the Stadium during the War years: Ulysses Kay’s *Of New Horizons* received its world premiere in a 29 July 1944 concert that featured three men in uniform, conductor Thor Johnson and duo-pianists Jack Lowe and Arthur Whittimore. Another notable American composer, Paul Creston, received his first Stadium hearings during this era. His *Pastorale and Tarantella* was played on 26 June and 14 July 1942, both times under the direction of Smallens, while his *Choric Dance No. 2* was conducted by Efreim Kurtz on 31 July 1943.

Some interesting novelties were heard during this time. On 30 July 1941, the Stadium was the site for the world premiere of Robert Russell Bennett’s *A Symphony in D for the Dodgers*, featuring Brooklyn Dodger broadcaster Red Barber as the narrator and Steinberg as the unlikely conductor. The *Herald-Tribune*’s Robert Lawrence found Barber’s delivery “drab and unimpressive” and compared Bennett’s music to Prokofiev’s *Classical Symphony*.¹²⁰ Later on, several orchestral works composed by stage and screen actor Lionel Barrymore were heard at the Stadium. His *Partita* for orchestra, strongly influenced by Bach and Handel,¹²¹ was heard on 2 August 1944 under the direction of Fabien Sevitzky. On 18 July 1945, Sevitzky, evidently a Barrymore specialist, conducted the Philharmonic-Symphony in the motion-picture star’s *Praeludium and Fugue*.

Lastly, on 3 and 4 July 1943 were several concerts programmed to encourage patriotic, pro-war sentiment. The concerts were conducted, and featured arrangements, by young composer-conductor Morton Gould. The 3 July concert was more international, including the first American performance of Nikolay Myaskovsky’s Sixteenth Symphony, Delius’s *A Song of Summer*, and arrangements of “marching songs” from England, China, and the Soviet Union by Gould himself. The 4 July concert replayed the “marching songs” and replaced the European symphonic pieces with American music: William Schuman’s *Newsreel—In Five Shots*, Roy Harris’s *Ode to Truth*, and Aaron

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 59.

¹²⁰ Robert Lawrence, “Dodgers’ Symphony at Stadium; Total: No Runs, No Hits, No Errors,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 31 July 1941.

¹²¹ Louis Biancolli, “Dr. Gillespie to Debut as Composer,” *New York World-Telegram*, 26 July 1944.

Copland's suite from *Billy the Kid*, as well as Gould's arrangements of W. C. Handy's *St. Louis Blues* and several popular standards. Gould's *American Salute* and *Fanfare for Freedom* were on both programs, while the 4 July concert featured his American Symphonette No. 2. At the end of the 3 July concert, the audience sang a song about the United Nations with music by Shostakovich. The concerts were expressions of American solidarity with her allies and foreshadowed the increasing use of popular music on the Stadium programs. The *New York Post* praised the orchestra for its virtuoso rendering of the Myaskovsky despite limited rehearsal time.¹²²

Soloists

Lorin Maazel was not the only prodigy to appear at Lewisohn Stadium during the World War Two era. On 6 July 1939, Efrem Kurtz and the Philharmonic accompanied two precocious talents: twelve-year-old pianist Julius Katchen and ten-year-old violinist Patricia Travers. This marked the only Stadium appearance for either soloist. Katchen was heard in Schumann's demanding A minor Concerto while Travers performed Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole*. The pianist had already performed with the orchestra at Carnegie Hall prior to his Stadium appearance¹²³ and, based on the critics' responses, was already an assured artist. As Taubman wrote, "Julius tossed off the Schumann concerto as if it were just another chore. He played with poise, facility, feeling, and a sense of style."¹²⁴ Less experienced than Katchen, Travers greatly impressed the critics. Biancolli wrote, "She swept through the concerto with clean intonation, a clear, penetrating tone and an amazing rhythmic pulse and alertness. Further, her legato in the slow movement was pure and seamless and she tossed off the quick finger work of the finale like a veteran."¹²⁵

Another prodigy was twelve-year-old, Brooklyn-born pianist Teresa Sterne, who performed with Smallens the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto on 17 July 1940. The critics were less enthusiastic with her than they were with Katchen and Travers, some of them commenting on the poor choice of concerto. As the *New York Herald Tribune* explained, "A work which requires less brawn for a veracious disclosure of its contents would have indubitably proved a more

¹²² *New York Post*, "Gould Performs American Music At Stadium During Weekend," 6 July 1943.

¹²³ Francis D. Perkins, "Boy and Girl Play in Stadium 'Youth Night,'" *New York Herald Tribune*, 7 July 1939.

¹²⁴ Howard Taubman, "'Children's Hour' Given At Stadium," *The New York Times*, 7 July 1939.

¹²⁵ Louis Biancolli, "Stadium Cheers Girl Violinist, 10, Boy Pianist, 12," *New York World-Telegram*, 7 July 1939.

felicitous vehicle for her gifts.”¹²⁶ Unlike Katchen and Travers, Sterne appeared several more times at the Stadium.

Adult soloists found their way to the City College campus as well. By this time, the Stadium had established itself as a desired venue, and some of the world’s finest solo acts were willing to perform for the people at a nominal salary. As noted earlier, on 8 July 1940, Wagnerian soprano Kirsten Flagstad made her only Stadium appearance, singing arias and excerpts by Wagner. Kolodin felt that the Stadium amplification system worked against her,¹²⁷ but the critics were kind to Flagstad, less so to McArthur.¹²⁸ Also making his only Stadium appearance in 1940 was French pianist and composer, Robert Casadesus, who, on 22 July, performed Mozart’s K. 488 concerto and Liszt’s A major concerto. Efrem Kurtz conducted. Poor weather resulted in a small turnout and Casadesus graciously agreed to perform the same works again the following night.¹²⁹

The 1941 season showcased a number of major talents. On Opening Night, 19 June, Artur Rubinstein made his Stadium debut performing the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto and met with a more enthusiastic response than did Sterne. He also performed a number of encores for the large, enthusiastic crowd.¹³⁰ Born in Poland and taught in Berlin by Joseph Joachim, Rubinstein was a child prodigy who had been accused of allowing his natural talent to make up for a lack of discipline. After a period in the thirties when he underwent a major restudy of the repertoire, he emerged a much more mature musician, eventually making over two hundred recordings. Known mostly for Chopin and the major German repertoire, Rubinstein also played the piano works of the Spanish composers Falla and Granados.¹³¹ Unlike Flagstad and Casadesus, Rubinstein returned to the Stadium on a number of occasions during the forties. Accompanied by Smallens, he performed Brahms’ Second Piano Concerto on the last concert of the 1941 season.

On 21 July 1941, young violinist Yehudi Menuhin made his Stadium debut. San Francisco-born Menuhin was another child prodigy who toured all over the world in his early years and, among other things, recorded the Elgar Violin Concerto with the seventy-five-year-old composer conducting. Menuhin performed with Kurtz the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto and Paganini’s D major

¹²⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Teresa Sterne Is Piano Soloist At the Stadium,” 18 July 1940.

¹²⁷ Irving Kolodin, “Flagstad Heard By Huge Audience,” *The New York Sun*, 9 July 1940.

¹²⁸ Francis D. Perkins, “Flagstad Sings Outdoors,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 July 1940.

¹²⁹ Jerome D. Bohm, “Two Concertos Mark Program At the Stadium,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 July 1940.

¹³⁰ Oscar Thompson, “Stadium Opening Sets Record,” *The New York Sun*, 20 June 1941.

¹³¹ Max Loppert, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Artur Rubinstein.” London: Macmillan, 2001.

Violin Concerto. The audience demanded an encore, and Messrs. Menuhin and Kurtz had one ready: Saint-Saëns's *Havanaise*. *The New York Times* critic was somewhat disappointed with the Mendelssohn, feeling that the Stadium's acoustical problem adversely affected Menuhin's tone and projection.¹³² This reservation, not shared by all the critics, notwithstanding, Menuhin appeared at the Stadium six additional times.

Something of a curiosity was heard on 9 August 1941 when harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler, the first such musician to achieve renown in the classical concert hall, made the first of two Stadium appearances. Accompanied by Smallens, Adler performed his own arrangements for harmonica and orchestra of standards by Vivaldi (the Concerto in A minor), Granados (Intermezzo from *Goyescas*), Albeniz ("Malagueña"), Bach (*Siciliana*, with pianist Richard Malaby), and, again with Malaby, encores by Granados and Rachmaninoff not listed in the review. Straus wrote in *The Times*, "Though the tone produced was exceedingly small for the wide spaces of the Stadium, it was sweet and mellow and used with musicianly effect in accurate and carefully detailed presentations of these classics." He later added, "monotony set in after he reached the Rachmaninoff and Granados selections."¹³³

On 7 August 1943, Metropolitan bass Ezio Pinza performed the first of three Stadium recitals, taking on Russian arias in his native Italian. *The New York Times* commented, "Mr. Pinza's Boris is too well known here to need comment. Last night he was in fine form and gave a splendid reading, both musical and dramatic, to this magnificent and regal music. Boris should be sung in Russian, but even in Italian, as Mr. Pinza did it, the effect was not dimmed."¹³⁴ Finally, virtuoso violinist Fritz Kreisler made his only Stadium appearance on Opening Night of 1944. An American violinist of Austrian birth, Kreisler was a child prodigy whose teachers at the Musikverein Konservatorium included Anton Bruckner, with whom he studied theory. With Beecham conducting, Kreisler performed Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto that Virgil Thomson described as "noble, frank and shapely and sweeping. If the details were not always quite accurate as to pitch the progress of the whole was so plainly reasonable that one can only be grateful to this artist for having preserved the simplicity of

¹³² *The New York Times*, "Yehudi Menuhin Stadium Soloist," 22 July 1941.

¹³³ Noel Straus, "Harmonica Solos Heard At Stadium," *The New York Times*, 10 August 1941. It is difficult, if not impossible, to discern how many Stadium soloists performed arias in their native tongues rather than in the original languages.

¹³⁴ *The New York Times*, "Ezio Pinza Heard In Opera Excerpts," 8 August 1943.

his musical conceptions, as well as the beauty of his tone.”¹³⁵ Kreisler had been scheduled to perform in the 1941 Stadium opener but suffered a serious pedestrian accident several months prior to the concert.¹³⁶

Three Popular Acts

Evidently, the temptation to incorporate popular music into the proceedings proved too great for the management of the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts. Aside from some of the selections at the all-Gershwin concerts from the thirties, the World War Two era at the Stadium featured the first forays into jazz and popular standards. Money problems were partly responsible; perhaps there was a need to branch out from the concert hall. Interestingly, two of the three concerts met with disappointing returns at the box office.

The first of the three was a smashing success. On 14 July 1941, big-band leader and clarinetist Benny Goodman made his Lewisohn Stadium debut in front of an estimated audience of 14,000 to 15,000, many of whom were bobby-soxers and jitter-buggers. Classically trained in his native Chicago, Goodman was nonetheless hugely influenced by New Orleans jazz. He began his career by playing in various big bands from all over America and even performed in pit orchestras for such Gershwin musicals as *Strike Up the Band* and *Girl Crazy* (1930-31). Known as the “King of Swing,” with a following similar to that of recent rock and rollers, Goodman founded bands and trios and, from 1936 to 1939, performed with his big band regular on CBS. He also was enlightened enough to hire and play with black musicians; a trio he formed included Teddy Wilson on piano and Lionel Hampton on vibes. Goodman was also the first jazz musician to play classical repertoire, commissioning concertos by Copland and Hindemith and taking on works by Nielsen and Stravinsky, among others.¹³⁷

In terms of the music performed, the concert was half-classical, half-popular. Canadian maestro Reginald Stewart began the program with a Beethoven’s Fifth that met with mixed reviews from the New York critics. Kolodin wrote, “One pointed complaint of the listener able to take both sections [of the concert] in stride would be that the men of the Philharmonic played their Beethoven with so little of the zest and enthusiasm lavished by Goodman’s men on their music.”¹³⁸ After the Beethoven, Stewart and the orchestra accompanied

¹³⁵ Virgil Thomson, “Con Spirito,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 June 1944.

¹³⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Fritz Kreisler’s Skull Fractured By Truck at Madison and 57th,” 27 April 1941.

¹³⁷ Richard Wang, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Benny Goodman.” London: Macmillan, 2001.

¹³⁸ Irving Kolodin, “Goodman And Band Appear At Stadium,” *The New York Sun*, 15 July 1941.



Figure 19: Frank Sinatra, here rehearsing at the Stadium with Max Steiner and the New York Philharmonic, performed without compensation in 1943 to disappointing reviews.

Courtesy of Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo (ID: F3K59R).

Goodman in the Mozart Clarinet Concerto. As Bennett wrote:

Mr. Goodman is no novice at the exhibiting of his artistic prowess in serious music, although the greater part of his career has been devoted to compositions of the jitterbug variety.

He possesses style and taste that spring from the sources of genuine art, and these together with clean, crisp and smooth technique brought conviction to those who may have doubted his ability in the more cultured field of interpretation.¹³⁹

Not all the critics were convinced. Bohm wrote in the *Herald Tribune*:

Mr. Goodman's delivery of the solo part in the Mozart Concerto was tonally ingratiating and technically adroit; but one felt a certain diffidence in his approach to the music which inhibited a full realization of the composer's intentions.¹⁴⁰

Following the American premiere of William Walton's *Crown Imperial*, which Bohm dismissed as "a pretentious, long-winded bit of fustian",¹⁴¹ the Philharmonic vacated the premises to make way for Goodman's band. *The New York Times's* account follows:

The session began with "One o' Clock Jump." The audience was electrified. First a trombonist "took it away." Then Cootie Williams had a spell on the trumpet. He was followed by the five saxophonists in the front row, who stood as they played. Shoulders began to shake and feet to beat. The music got louder and louder. The throng in the bleachers rose. Word got around that dancers would be allowed to come to the field to dance. A stampede seemed to be about to start.

But the next number, "Intermezzo," was a slow one and the audience calmed down. Those who wanted to dance did so, others came as near to the stage as possible.¹⁴²

The jam session might have gone on all night had Goodman and the band not brought it to a close with a rendition of *The Star-Spangled Banner*.¹⁴³

The 1941 Lewisohn Stadium concert mirrored Goodman's career. The clarinetist remained a jazz icon who dabbled in the classics. In his only other Stadium concert, on 19 July 1960, Goodman again played the Mozart, then

¹³⁹ Grena Bennett, "14,000 Hear Goodman Play At the Stadium," *New York Journal-American*, 15 July 1941.

¹⁴⁰ Jerome D. Bohm, "Classics Mixed With Swing on Lewisohn Bill," *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 July 1941.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *The New York Times*, "Goodman Rouses Stadium Audience," 15 July 1941.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

performed with his band in the concert's second half. *PM's Weekly* reported an amusing incident from backstage during the 1941 Goodman concert:

Reginald Stewart, who conducted the Philharmonic-Symphony in the classical first half of the program, recently expressed himself as all-out for jazz. When Benny & Co. took over, he listened carefully and watched even more carefully the effect the music was having. There was little doubt that the effect was more violent than anything he could hope to produce. Whether he would want to produce it he didn't say, but the picture leads us to believe he wouldn't.

Mr. Stewart left shortly after Cootie Williams trumpeted the *Concerto for Cootie*. The crowd stayed on and on, and finally had to be shoosed out.¹⁴⁴

Whatever the critics' (and Stewart's) misgivings, the 1941 Lewisohn Swing concert was a popular success. Sadly, such was not the case two years later, when crooner Frank Sinatra took the stage in his only Stadium concert. The *New York Mirror* reported on the circumstances by which "The Voice" came to City College:

Sinatra's Stadium appearance came about at the invitation of Mrs. Charles S. Guggenheimer, chairman. As the Stadium concerts are now experiencing their annual deficit, Mrs. Guggenheimer requested Sinatra to contribute his phenomenal box-office appeal and also to lower his usual concert fee of \$3,000. Instead, Sinatra offered to appear at the Stadium for free. Barring trouble with that mortal foe of Stadium concerts, the Weather Man, it is hoped that the concert will halve the season's deficit.¹⁴⁵

For his part, Sinatra believed very strongly in the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts and in all symphonic ventures. He was very much a fan of classical music and he also considered the Lewisohn concerts "real democracy at work."¹⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the 3 August 1943 concert was not a success, neither artistically nor at the box office. The program consisted of motion-picture music, most of it by Hollywood composer Max Steiner, who also conducted, and popular standards orchestrated for the Philharmonic by Axel Stordahl.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ *PM's Weekly*, "Benny Has 'Em Jiving at The Stadium," 15 July 1941.

¹⁴⁵ *New York Mirror*, "Sinatra vs. Stadium Deficit," 30 July 1943.

¹⁴⁶ *PM's Weekly*, "Sinatra to the Rescue," 30 July 1943.

¹⁴⁷ The complete program was

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1. MAX STEINER: *The Informer* (RKO Radio film)
2. ALFRED NEWMAN: *The Bluebird* (20th Century Fox)
3. VICTOR YOUNG: *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
4. A Group of Songs

Concerning the movie music, *PM*'s Mark Schubart wrote, "None of these scores holds up well on the concert stage. Whether it is because the music cannot be 'miked' as it is on a sound stage or because the orchestra wasn't interested in what it was doing, most of the excerpts sounded sluggish and meandering. And dull."¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Sinatra, for whatever reason, was not in good voice. Bowles wrote in the *Herald Tribune*:

Mr. Sinatra's admirers assured me that last night he was not at his best. Certainly he seemed unsure of the "symphonic" accompaniments that Mr. Steiner was conducting for him, and the microphone was obviously not completely to his taste. His voice was pleasant, and generally under complete control. His diction was excellent and his personality projection satisfactory. In thanking the audience for its enthusiasm, he referred to the members of the Philharmonic as "the boys in the band." It was surprising to note that in spite of the almost ferocious fanaticism of the younger feminine spectators, the audience was in reality extremely small. Only about 7,000 persons attended.¹⁴⁹

(a) ARTHUR SCHWARTZ-HOWARD DIETZ: "Dancing in the Dark"

(b) JIMMY VAN HEUSEN- JOHNNY BURKE: "It's Always You"

(c) JEROME KERN-OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN: "Ol' Man River"

Mr. Sinatra

5. DMITRI TIOMKIN: *Lost Horizon* (Columbia Film)

-INTERMISSION-

6. MAX STEINER: *Gone With The Wind* (Selznick-International film)

7. MAX STEINER: Petite Valse and Petite March

8. MAX STEINER: *Now Voyager* (Warner Bros. Film)

9. A Group of Songs

(a) MAX STEINER: "It Can't Be Wrong" (from Warner Bros. Film *Now Voyager*)

(b) COLE PORTER: "Night and Day"

(c) CARL LAMPEL: "Close to You"

(d) JEROME KERN-OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN: "The Song Is You"

Mr. Sinatra

ENCORES

(a) GEORGE GERSHWIN: "Embraceable You"

(b) ARTHUR ALTMAN: "All or Nothing At All"

(c) HARRY WARREN: "You'll Never Know"

(d) RICHARD WHITNEY: "She's Funny That Way"

Mr. Sinatra

¹⁴⁸ Mark Schubart, "Sinatra Croons in Vain," *PM's Weekly*, 4 August 1943.

¹⁴⁹ Paul Bowles, "Frank Sinatra Is the Soloist At Lewisohn Stadium Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, 4 August 1943.

In Stadium terms, 7,000 was indeed a small crowd and it seems a pity that the Sinatra concert proved so lackluster, given Sinatra's willingness to perform without compensation. One is tempted to surmise that Stadium audiences truly did prefer the classics, at least within the Stadium context. Perhaps also the Philharmonic was not, at this time, equipped to handle popular music. Then again, this concert may have taken place while Sinatra was suffering the toll on his voice due to overuse that led to a period of decline in the late forties. He rebounded in 1953 with a series of recordings on the Capitol later that revealed him to be in better voice than ever and featured arrangements by such big band leaders as Billy May, Gordon Jenkins and Nelson Riddle.

Nearly two years later, on 2 July 1945, another popular concert—featuring Dinah Shore with musical-comedy conductor Al Goodman as arranger, and Alexander Smallens conducting—also attracted 7,000 to 7,500 music lovers, many of whom were young.¹⁵⁰ Unlike Sinatra, however, Shore received mostly

¹⁵⁰ The complete program was:

NAT SIMON: "Poinciana"

GEORGE GERSHWIN: "Summertime"

DAVID ROSE: "Holiday for Strings"

ROBERT WRIGHT & GEORGE FORREST: "Strange Music"

SONGS WITH ORCHESTRA

RICHARD RODGERS & LORENZ HART: "My Romance"; "Where Or
When"; "Little Girl Blue"; "I Didn't Know What Time It Was"

Miss Shore

DAVID PEREZ: "Ay, Ay, Ay" (arranged by Freire)

AL GOODMAN: Chopin Impromptu ("I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" - Carroll)

FELIX ARNDT: "Nola"

SIGMUND ROMBERG: "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise"

-INTERMISSION-

RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN: Selections from *Carousel*

AL GOODMAN: "Three Blind Mice"

IRVING BERLIN: "A Pretty Girl is Like A Melody"

SONGS WITH ORCHESTRA

GABRIEL LUIZ: "Amor, Amor"

COLE PORTER: "Night and Day"

GEORGE GERSHWIN: "The Man I Love"

JEROME KERN-OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN: "My Bill"

Miss Shore

positive notices for her singing despite an amplifying system, which, according to *PM's Weekly's* Robert Hague:

made her lower tones sound throaty and husky; and the elaborate orchestral backgrounds provided were a little heavy for her light and intimate manner of singing. It was with her two final encores—Candy and I Said No—sung only to Ticker's (Freeman's) piano hidden at the back of the orchestra . . . that she really went to town. Here her personality and inimitable way of putting over a song really triumphed, and the crowd wanted more.¹⁵¹

Opera

Lewisohn Stadium during the World War Two era offered no major innovations in opera. Not only were fewer operas staged, but all of those produced had been seen during the previous decade. In 1940, only one opera—*Carmen*—was produced. In 1941, no opera was given, while in 1942, a concert version of Johann Strauss, Jr.'s *The Gypsy Baron* was given three times. The operetta was conducted by Robert Stolz, whose yearly performances of operetta excerpts and Viennese fare began on 8 July 1943 and became popular with Stadium audiences. Other than the 1942 *The Gypsy Baron*, all eleven of the opera productions heard at the Stadium from 1939 to 1945 were conducted by the indefatigable Smallens: Verdi's *Aida* (1939 and 1944), Bizet's *Carmen* (1939, 1940, 1943, 1944 and 1945), Verdi's *La traviata* (1943 and 1944), and Puccini's *La Bohème* (1943 and 1945). They were scheduled for two consecutive nights and usually featured mainstays from the Metropolitan Opera House.

Of the eleven productions, arguably the most notable was that of *La Traviata* of 19 and 20 July 1943. This was the first staged opera featuring a Lewisohn Stadium favorite, New York tenor Jan Peerce, who played the role of Alfredo. Peerce was a favorite singer of Toscanini whose voice was quite powerful if not the last word in tonal beauty. Peerce first sang at the Stadium on 31 July 1939 in a concert of Wagner excerpts conducted by Reiner.¹⁵² He

JEROME KERN: "Waltz in Springtime"

JEROME KERN MEDLEY: "All The Things You Are"; "Ol' Man River"; "More and More"

UNITED NATIONS MEDLEY

¹⁵¹ Robert A. Hague, "Dinah Shore Sings At the Stadium," *PM's Weekly*, 4 July 1943.

¹⁵² The complete program was:

1. RICHARD WAGNER: Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*

next was heard in the earlier-mentioned, Stolz-conducted Viennese evening of 8 July 1943, an appearance which led Bohm to proclaim, "Mr. Peerce was in excellent form and poured forth his appealing, vibrant voice with exceptional freedom of production."¹⁵³ Cast with Brazilian soprano Bidu Sayao as Violetta and Alexander Sved as Giorgio Germont, Peerce, who became a frequent Stadium performer over the next several decades, proved the star of the production. *The New York Times* critic, who found much to praise about the other performers as well, enthused, "Mr. Peerce as Alfredo was at his best. He sang in fine form and with the elegance and feeling that Verdi demands from this part."¹⁵⁴

Like most Lewisohn Stadium operas, the 1943 *La Traviata* was praised for its musical values more than for its production values. Apparently, it was difficult to determine when the scene was an interior or exterior. As Thompson explained:

On the printed programs all was as it should be, the types specifying (I) Violetta's drawing room in Paris and (II) Garden of Violetta's country place near Paris. But with the first parting of the curtains the garden was revealed, and when the second chapter was reached after an intermission, Alfredo was discovered in a drawing room — or at least in a room.¹⁵⁵

Nobody came to the Stadium expecting the same production values as those offered at the Met. Still, the affairs were costly and evidently took their toll. From 1946 until the last Philharmonic season of 1964, only one opera was produced each summer, except for the years 1952, 1953, 1959 and 1960, in which no operas were programmed. All of the operas heard during these final nineteen seasons were long-established staples of the repertoire and were

2. RICHARD WAGNER: Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* (with Wagner's concert ending)

3. RICHARD WAGNER: Love Duet from Act II of *Tristan und Isolde*

-INTERMISSION-

4. RICHARD WAGNER: "Ride of the Valkyries"

5. RICHARD WAGNER: Spring Song from *Die Walküre*

6. RICHARD WAGNER: Forest Murmurs [Waldweben], from *Siegfried*

7. RICHARD WAGNER: Rhine Journey from *Götterdämmerung*

8. RICHARD WAGNER: Immolation Scene from *Götterdämmerung*

¹⁵³ Jerome D. Bohm, "Viennese Night Is Presented by Philharmonic," *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 July 1943.

¹⁵⁴ *The New York Times*, "12,000 At Stadium Hear 'La Traviata,'" 20 July 1943.

¹⁵⁵ Oscar Thompson, "12,000 At Stadium Hear 'La Traviata,'" *The New York Sun*, 20 July 1943.

presented in concert form.

Despite a world war, the increasing frequency of airplane noise of and the growing dissatisfaction with the festival's over-reliance on the standard repertoire, Lewisohn Stadium remained a much-desired locale for thousands of New Yorkers as well as for many of the world's finest performers. Even though interest in new American music somewhat waned, some American and European contemporary composers were championed and some noteworthy premieres were given. Minnie Guggenheimer declared that America needed to be "civilization's trustee" during this intense time and it cannot be argued that the Stadium Concerts were quite successful in fulfilling that role. But the issues negatively affecting the festival during the World War Two years, artistic and otherwise, would linger on afterwards. The next chapter will discuss how those issues continued to affect the Stadium Concerts and how they endured for several more decades despite them.

Chapter 6

A Beloved New York Institution: 1946-1964

During the New York Philharmonic's final two decades at Lewisohn Stadium, the practice of alternating principal conductors with guest conductors continued. Among these conductors were several future Philharmonic music directors, some established veterans, and some notable newcomers. The Stadium Concerts also featured some top-flight soloists, every one of them still apparently willing to perform for the masses at a reduced rate. Most memorable among these soloists was a young American pianist named Van Cliburn, who appeared at the Stadium fresh from his headline-making first prize at the 1958 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow.

However, the repertoire of the Stadium concerts during these nineteen seasons may have been the most important factor. Economic issues, combined with a desire for better-prepared performances, led initially to fewer concerts during a given week and subsequently to fewer weeks (six) altogether. To make most of those concerts financially viable, the symphonic repertoire offered during these years was by far the least adventurous of the Stadium's history with few new compositions, American or non-American, introduced. In addition, despite the lackluster receptions for the concerts featuring Frank Sinatra and Dinah Shore in the early forties, Guggenheimer and the members of the Stadium Committee concluded that the public desired more popular fare. The concerts from 1946 to 1964 were often hit-or-miss productions, the "winter-concert season" tone of previous decades often replaced by an "anything can happen" way of running things. The response from critics and audience members was mixed, with some bemoaning the advent of pops and jazz and others embracing it.

These were the waning years of Lewisohn Stadium, as the ethnic change of the neighborhood, the flight of many to the suburbs, the success of recordings, and the ever-present deficit made the Stadium a less desirable locale and worked against the festival's continuance. Nonetheless, the Stadium Concerts were capable from time to time of packing in large audiences, many of the concertgoers returning out of a sense of tradition and in tribute to the charismatic woman who ran the concerts. It was a story that perhaps could only have happened in New York.

The Final Two Decades

Artistic considerations were a factor in the decision to stage fewer concerts during the last two decades of Lewisohn Stadium. It was no secret that the New York Philharmonic sometimes turned in pedestrian performances and that a major reason was insufficient rehearsal time. As Olin Downes wrote:

The public will patronize distinctive performances of worth-while music as enthusiastically in the summer as in the winter, and enjoy hearing that music in the open air, even if it has to be drowned out at intervals, as at the Stadium, by the occasional roar of big planes passing overhead. But the public is just as bored by second-class performances in the summer as it is in the winter, and just as indifferent to them.¹

In that same article, Downes noted the improvement in orchestral execution due to the increased rehearsal time, praising early 1946 concerts led by Artur Rodzinski and George Szell.²

For her part, Guggenheimer and her comrades in the Stadium Committee claimed a non-musical reason for the eschewal of concerts altogether in August from the mid-fifties on. As Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer writes:

Mother has often been asked how it happens that, despite the summer-long influx of tourists into New York and the fact that vacations for the resident working population are apt to be pretty regularly staggered across a two-month period, the Stadium Concerts, the city's foremost summer cultural attraction, always terminate rather abruptly early in August. Her interrogators would undoubtedly be surprised to learn that the real reason is nothing more nor less than mushrooms!

These fast-growing and flavorful fungi, I am advised by a reliable mushroom expert, are at their most prolific best in the areas immediately surrounding New York City during the month of August. The expert who passes this valuable information along happens to be my mother, who has picked upward of fifteen hundred pounds of the tasty little gourmet delicacies during the past sixty-odd Augusts and apparently has no immediate intention of letting her public sponsorship of Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Mahler interfere in any way with her private passion for mushrooms and mushrooming.³

A nice enough excuse, perhaps. But Untermeyer does not explain why, prior to the late forties, the concerts ran daily well into August. Nor does she

¹ Olin Downes, "Change in Stadium Policy," *The New York Times*, 23 June 1946.

² Ibid.

³ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother is Minnie*, 179-180.



Figure 20: Left to right, Stadium Concerts publicist Alix Williamson, Minnie Guggenheimer, and associate Stadium Concerts Chairwoman Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-097-

mention the ever-increasing deficit, rising to over \$100,000 as early as 1948.⁴ Two years later, financial issues as well as Mother Nature led to the cutting of one week from the eight-week series.⁵ By the middle of the decade, the concert series lasted only six weeks with five concerts per week. The entire 1959 season was almost cancelled in its entirety.⁶

In addition, well before the Stadium Concerts ended in 1966, some voices of dissent could be heard. The Stadium was clearly no longer an ideal place for musical entertainment. In 1952, Irving Kolodin wrote a scathing text on the

⁴ *Variety*, "100G Deficit Is Seen for Lewisohn Concerts But Prices Are Cut Anyway," 7 April 1948. The prices were cut in the hopes that cheaper seats would lead to more customers and a reduced deficit: "Feeling is that the higher-priced sections, which didn't sell well enough last summer except on occasional high-spotted nights, will do better and cut the estimated deficit. Last year's deficit was under \$50,000."

⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Concert Season At Stadium Cut Short by Rains," 19 July 1950.

⁶ *New York Post*, "Stadium Concerts in Peril," 28 April 1959.

venue and its concerts:

Do you have a nice village green where a band plays and you listen to music on a quiet summer evening while birds wheel in the distance and life seems suspended?

Well, you're a lot better off than New Yorkers are with the Lewisohn Stadium concerts, which opened last week for the 35th summer's activity. A big orchestra, Dmitri Mitropoulos as conductor and Marian Anderson as soloist may sound like a music lover's dream come true, but it's more like a nightmare.

First place, there's the problem of getting there—a nice torrid subway train or a jam-packed bus, instead of that walk through sheltered streets to your village green. Even if you drive a car, you face anything up to 20 minutes' walk from your parking place—if you can find one.

It doesn't cost much to get in—50 cents to dollar and a half⁷—but once you're in what do you get? A mossy bank, a flower-scented bower? Guess again. Either a stony seat on the stadium proper (nicely sun-baled on a 90-degree day) or a wooden chair on what is politely called the field but resembles a “field” like the Sahara resembles the cricket green at Eton.

Assuming you are music lover enough to brave all this and the amplification, too, it is Stadium tradition that only the quietest spots are interrupted by passing fire engines, and airplanes stay far away until the slow movement of the symphony or the concerto. Then they're inbound or outbound, landing and taking off from nearby La Guardia every minute on the beat. Fourteen were counted at the recent opening, and that's a fairly quiet night.

What we're getting at here, if it is not already sufficiently clear, is that outdoor music in New York has about as much place as a baseball game on a rifle range. The persistence of those who put on the Stadium Concerts is one of the wonders of the age, but it's pretty evident by now that, year by year, they have less and less relation to a musical performance, and more and more resemblance to a cultural circus.⁸

That last point in Kolodin's critique was telling. The Stadium Concerts survived into the mid-Sixties largely on the strength of tradition and the city's affection for the madcap woman who ran the concerts. Some people came to the Stadium out of nostalgia. Many showed up for the big names that took the stage from time to time. But in the end, the people came to see Minnie.

⁷ According to DollarTimes.com, \$.50 in 1946 is worth \$6.20 in today's dollars, while \$1.50 is worth \$18.60.

⁸ Irving Kolodin, “NY's Lewisohn Stadium Not Ideal Place for Concerts,” *Houston Post*, 1 July 1952.



Figure 21: Minnie, as she was known by Stadium-goers, at the Stadium.
Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID:
800-097-44-001).

Interlude

Minnie

The chairwoman of the Stadium Concerts for all but several of their seasons was born in New York City on 22 October 1882, where she spent most of her life. She rarely left New York except for summer vacations on the Jersey shore and one trip to Europe when she was young. Minnie Guggenheimer was part of a wealthy family dominated by males who worked in the legal profession. As mentioned earlier, her husband, Charlie, was Adolph Lewisohn's legal counsel. Suffice it to say, Minnie never knew financial hardship. In addition to her running of the Stadium Concerts, she was also active in the funding of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, as was her daughter and biographer, Sophie Guggenheimer Untermeyer.

Minnie did have something of a musical background. She learned the piano and was reportedly quite accomplished, capable of playing virtuoso works by Liszt, among others.⁹ Other experiences in musical education, including beginner's composition lessons with Rubin Goldmark,¹⁰ resulted in Minnie feeling empowered enough to play a larger role than she perhaps should have in the programming of the Stadium Concerts. She even assisted with the programs during the Stadium's first two decades, when Arthur Judson was mostly responsible for them.¹¹ This resulted in decisions on her part that ranged from inspired (i.e., George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, etc.) to misguided (i.e., a "Southern Night" in Lewisohn Stadium's Harlem).¹² According to her daughter, Minnie also made hit-or-miss decisions with conductors and soloists as well. For example, a Gilbert and Sullivan Night featuring Danny Kaye performing his famed "patter" songs was suggested to her. But because she could not remember Kaye's first name, she hired another young singer whose last name began with a "K." According to Untermeyer, the result was a half-empty house.¹³

⁹ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother is Minnie*, 44.

¹⁰ Ibid., 114. Goldmark was Gershwin's teacher as well.

¹¹ Ibid., 106-7. Untermeyer reports that her mother "imported" Judson from Philadelphia, paving the way for his ascension to the leaderships of the New York Philharmonic and Columbia Artists Management. Judson continued running the Philadelphia Orchestra while maintaining his presidency of the other two institutions. Judson stepped down from his Stadium post in 1941, from which point Minnie held near-total control.

¹² Ibid., 130-31. According to her daughter, Minnie fell for the charms of an attractive conductor from the South who persuaded her to stage the concert. Little did she know that the night, which was cancelled due to lack of concert repertoire, involved several segregationists and a racist general. Clearly unaware of the tensions between the North and South, Minnie assured Stadium Concerts' publicity director Alix Williamson that black soldiers would still be allowed to attend the concert.

¹³ Ibid., 114. Untermeyer does not mention the name of that singer.

A chapter in Untermeyer's book, "Pandeminnium" lays bare the many successes and failures in her mother's running of the concerts. The cover of the book describes the work as "The memories of a New York City woman whose energy, good nature, malapropisms, and ability to create chaos where order originally reigned have made her life and the lives of those around her a joyous confusion." Indeed, "chaotic" would be a good word to describe Minnie's leadership, although it cannot be denied, given the often-large audiences and longevity of the Stadium Concerts, that it worked.

To those who remember the eccentric, mile-a-minute talker, Minnie Guggenheimer (*née* Minnie Schafer), it probably would be a surprise to find out that, to Marie Volpe, Minnie's outstanding quality at first meeting was her shyness.¹⁴ At the beginning of her relationship with the future Stadium chairwoman, it was so. As her daughter explained in her biography of her mother, Minnie did begin life as a shy and mild-mannered woman who was particularly intimidated by her mother-in-law, Eliza Katzenberg Guggenheimer. The latter never really approved of her son's choice of a bride and was a worldly intellectual, very enlightened among women of her day.¹⁵ Even more noteworthy were the recitals held at her apartment featuring a number of the major musical talents of the day, such as Enrico Caruso and Serge Prokofiev, among others. To Eliza, Minnie was only good for having babies and would never amount to much more than that.¹⁶ Untermeyer is probably right in stating that the Stadium Concerts was Minnie's hugely successful attempt to beat her mother-in-law in terms of staging music concerts, with Lewisohn Stadium as the venue instead of a fashionable New York City apartment.

There was also a tragic reason for what became an obsession for Minnie. A year after losing her first daughter at the age of only four months, Minnie and her husband gave birth to a beautiful second daughter named Elizabeth who later perished at the age of seven due to an ear infection. Devastated by this loss, Minnie, in Untermeyer's words, "plunged into sudden rash of self-indulgence."¹⁷ The shopping sprees and frequent attendance at shows and other events led acquaintances to worry about Minnie's sanity. It was at this time that the Volpes approached the future chairwoman of the Stadium Concerts with their ambitious idea to stage outdoor concerts at Lewisohn Stadium. Desperate for something to take her mind off her tragic loss, as well as a chance to outdo her mother-in-law, she eagerly threw herself into this adventure. She did so with

¹⁴ Volpe, *Arnold Volpe: Bridge Between Two Musical Worlds*, 150.

¹⁵ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother is Minnie*, 61.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

a passion that never went away. As Untermeyer states, “that was the beginning of Stadium Concerts. It was also the real beginning of Minnie Guggenheimer.”¹⁸

Minnie and a small number of women, including her biographer, ran the Stadium Concerts purely out of a desire to culturally better New Yorkers from all walks of life. In an era where people were perhaps more forward-thinking and generous than today, the women talked donors into giving their money and conductors and soloists into performing for a small fee. It never occurred to Minnie to seek financial assistance from the government nor to let the orchestra run the concerts themselves, as was the case with Philadelphia’s Robin Hood Dell concerts. Was it due to the politics of the time that Minnie and the ladies never thought of government support? Not at all. Would the concerts have been better run by the New York Philharmonic? Probably. As Untermeyer writes:

I have often secretly suspected that that [Minnie] would not like to see the Stadium Concerts become completely self-supporting during her lifetime. For this would eliminate her now dearly cherished role as the gallant little heroine who manages somehow, year after year, to save the situation all by herself at the eleventh hour. It would also, conceivably, transform the whole thing into a smooth-running and thoroughly professional operation, which she could no longer control by pure personal whim and caprice in her inimitable harum-scarum fashion.”¹⁹

In short, Lewisohn Stadium was Minnie’s show all the way. Few were those who did not give money to the venture. Minnie would burst into tears on the spot or claim, rightly or wrongly, that the festival was soon to be out of business. So much for the shy maiden who began the Stadium Concerts unable to measure up to her frightening mother-in-law. Lewisohn Stadium was her passion, her mission. Many New Yorkers and performers, for their part, found her irresistible and impossible to turn down.

Worth mentioning were the necessities that enabled Minnie to run the festival without legal trouble, necessities that, according to her daughter, were put in place by the Guggenheimers and Untermeyers without her mother ever knowing about them:

Originally, Stadium Concerts was a stock corporation. Then, at Pop’s suggestion and without Mother’s ever realizing it had been done, it was changed into a Delaware membership corporation, partly to give Stadium contributors the benefit of Federal income-tax exemption and even more to get Mother off the hook on any possible personal liability.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid. 30.

¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁰ Ibid., 136.

Untermeyer also states in her book that all involved succeeded in letting Minnie think, to the end of her running of the concerts in 1964, that she single-handedly ran the concerts by herself.²¹ She may well have gone to her grave believing it was so.

While most New Yorkers may have been unaware of the craziness behind the scenes, there was more than enough zaniness at the concerts themselves. Once again, it was Minnie who was responsible for most of it. At some point in the mid-forties, she began to speak to Stadium audiences at intermission and, from then on, became as big a reason to attend the concerts as were the performers and the repertoire. New Yorkers howled with laughter at Minnie's malaprops, mispronunciations, and occasionally off-color *faux pas* as she promoted upcoming concerts. Here are a few that she actually said to Stadium audiences:

Tell everybody you know to come to the Stadium. And tell everybody you don't know too, because unless we have people in the empty seats I'll simply go bust!

[Next week we will have] one of the best-known names in the musical world, Ezio Pinza, *bass*.... Oh dear, that can't be right. A bass is a kind of fish!

We won't be able to have that thing by Smetana tonight, but I don't think it matters very much. Smetana is some kind of mustard or sour cream, isn't it?

When Mayor Robert F. Wagner would arrive to make some opening-night remarks, Minnie inevitably introduced him as "Mayor Vahgner."

Summoning the Crown Prince of Sweden onstage, with a snap of her fingers, "Here, Prince, Prince!"

While three highly paid stars of the Metropolitan Opera were waiting in the wings, she told the audience, "If I get enough money, I'll be able to give you *better* artists in the future."²²

And so forth. Also, in the mid-forties, Minnie began something of a media career, appearing on radio and television (in the latter case, usually on Jack Paar's show) to practically order people to attend her Stadium Concerts. Her first appearance on the radio was highlighted by the following comment about an upcoming performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*: "And he's going to play with his favorite piece, Sketcher-Skercher—Sharasha—Shereecha—oh, damn it all, how the hell do you pronounce that woman's name?" According

²¹ Ibid., 137.

²² Canarina, *Pierre Monteux, Maître*, 176-77.

to Untermeyer, the station went off the air . . . only to be besieged by amused listeners asking for more. The phone was off the hook at the Guggenheimer home as well.²³

What a far cry from the attractive but shy wife and mother who once seemed destined to live only within the shadows of her family! What mattered to Minnie more than anything else was that Lewisohn Stadium was filled with as many listeners as possible. Clearly, she must have known that her often outrageous behavior lured them into Lewisohn Stadium as much as anything else. It is hard to say how Minnie felt about her image. Did she revel in it? Or did she put up with it in the interest of the concerts?

Her family's attitude is documented. After listing a large number of laugh-out-loud Minnie-isms in the first chapter of her book, Untermeyer reports that she and her family may have been the only New Yorkers who had never heard Minnie speak to the crowd. That was because when she spoke they ran for cover. As she writes, "I hide out in the nearest telephone booth or subterranean locker room until I hear the orchestra strike up the second half of the program and can be sure that the worst is over."²⁴

New York City is and has always been a city dominated by characters in all walks of life. Only in New York could baseball fans delight in watching Casey Stengel's early 60's Mets teams lose an average of 113 games a year. Only in New York could reporters and fans delight in Stengel's wacky press conferences after many of those games, the "Old Perfessor" usually speaking in a bizarre, rambling manner referred to by reporters as "Stengelese." And it is a city where perhaps only a Minnie Guggenheimer, herself compared by some to Stengel, can exist and be successful in her costly but honorable endeavor. It is not too far-fetched to state that many New Yorkers could see sheer goodness beneath the loud, rough, manic exterior and, because of it, support her mission in life.

On several occasions, the Stadium committee was able to declare, however reticently, that attendance records were set, notwithstanding the lesser number of concerts offered. In 1952, *Billboard* announced that the Stadium attracted an estimated 314,000 patrons, breaking a twelve-year record set in 1939. However, the same article mentioned that "the Stadium issues no financial statement to the public."²⁵ Eleven years later, in 1962, *The New York Times* announced that the total attendance increased from 1960s total by 20,700, rising from 173,800 to 194,500.²⁶ Even so, rumors existed after that 1962 season that the Stadium

²³ Untermeyer and Williamson, *Mother is Minnie*, 203-04.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁵ *Cincinnati (OH) Billboard*, "Stadium Hits 12-Yr. Record," 18 August 1951.

²⁶ *The New York Times*, "Music in Stadium Attracts 194,500," 16 August 1962.

Concerts might not continue. Guggenheimer scoffed at the notion, declaring that the concerts would “continue indefinitely.”²⁷ As it turned out, time was catching up not only with Lewisohn Stadium but with Minnie herself.

During the final two decades of the Stadium Concerts, some noteworthy events took place. In 1949, a brand-new stage with dressing rooms and other amenities was built to replace the temporary wooden makeshift stage built following the lightning storm of several years earlier. In addition, while Guggenheimer continued until almost the very end of the concerts to be their guiding light, her daughter, Sophie, played an increasingly large role as well, sometimes serving as her mother’s intermission replacement to the disappointment of Stadium-goers.²⁸

But one of the most intriguing offstage decisions in Stadium history came in April of 1951, when, for the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts, the New York Philharmonic was renamed, and henceforth known as, the Stadium Symphony Orchestra. The reasons for this move were described thusly by *The New York Times*’s Ross Parmenter:

The men themselves are not happy about the change because they are proud of being members of the Philharmonic. But the change emphasizes the fact that Stadium Concerts, Inc. is an independent enterprise and not merely the Philharmonic’s summer season. But more important than this, the new name possibly clears the ground for further sources of income. Under its name as the Philharmonic, the orchestra has an exclusive recording contract with Columbia Records. A new name might mean new recording contracts. Also, it is likely to facilitate negotiations with the National Broadcasting Company for telecasts of the concerts this summer. N. B. C. telecast the Monday night programs with the old name, but it is understandable that it would just as soon not give too much publicity to the orchestra, which in its winter broadcasts is a mainstay to the prestige of its rival, the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Precedents for the change in name are to be found in Boston and Philadelphia. The Boston “Pops” and the Boston Symphony have the same personnel. Ditto the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Sally MacDougall, “It’s a Tough Job Pinch-Hitting For ‘Minnie’ at City Concerts,” *New York World-Telegram & Sun*, 8 July 1953.

²⁹ Ross Parmenter, “The World Of Music: Orchestra Is Renamed,” *The New York Times*, 29 April 1951.

Despite the change of name, the recordings³⁰ never came into being, although some radio and television broadcasts occurred. And even though the newspapers studiously referred to the ensemble as the Stadium Symphony Orchestra, no one was fooled into thinking that the group was not the New York Philharmonic. The only studio-produced recording of a Stadium concert was a highlight of the first Jazz Jamboree concert in which Louis Armstrong and his band performed Alfredo Antonini's *Concerto Grosso on W. C. Handy's St. Louis Blues*. Following the performance, Leonard Bernstein addressed the members of the audience, informing them that Armstrong's long-time dream was fulfilled in playing with the New York Philharmonic. He did not call the ensemble the Stadium Symphony Orchestra. From this point on, I will refer to the orchestra as the "New York Philharmonic" in concerts that took place up to and including the 1950 season, the "Stadium Symphony Orchestra" in concerts from 1951 on.

Conductors

Two Future New York Philharmonic Music Directors

During the final two decades of the Philharmonic at the Stadium, two future music directors ascended to the podium. The first of them, Greek maestro Dmitri Mitropoulos, was already familiar to New York audiences having made his Philharmonic debut during the 1940-41 season.³¹ The second, Indian conductor Zubin Mehta, made his New York debut at the Stadium.

In his book on the Philharmonic, Shanet quotes Mitropoulos's Introduction to Olin Downes's book *Ten Operatic Masterpieces* in which the conductor professes to his heart being "very close to the theater as a whole," despite his profession as a specialist in symphonic music.³² As music director during the years that followed, Mitropoulos gave a number of concert performances of operas and led the first ever recording of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*. It was thus fitting that Mitropoulos's Stadium debut was a concert performance of an opera, in this case Puccini's

³⁰ In the late fifties and early sixties, the New York Philharmonic made a series of recordings for Everest Records under the pseudonym, "Stadium Symphony Orchestra of New York." The "of New York" shows that these recordings had nothing to do with the Stadium concerts for in their context, the orchestra was known simply as the Stadium Symphony Orchestra. The recordings were led by such conductors as Leopold Stokowski and Carlos Chavez, among several others, and, for the most part, featured repertoire not performed at the Stadium during the years in question. In prior years, the Philharmonic made recordings with Leonard Bernstein under the name, "The Stadium Concerts Symphony Orchestra."

³¹ Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 310.

³² *Ibid.*, 313.

Madama Butterfly on 14 and 15 July 1947. The critics were nearly unanimous in their praise for the conductor. John Briggs noted that Mitropoulos was far more dynamic than most pit conductors and stated, "The whole performance, in fact, had an air of enthusiasm and spontaneity never present in companies which count themselves lucky if they get through without an actual breakdown."³³ *The Brooklyn Citizen* had high praise for the cast and wrote that Mitropoulos "worked zealously in spite of the hot weather and received the full co-operation of the musicians."³⁴ And Robert Bagar of the *New York World-Telegram* opined, "Mr. Mitropoulos gave us the score, not as a succession of pretty sounds, but as a symphonic expression covering every detail of the theme and its development. And in such a manner and bit-by-bit did one listener, at least, come face-to-face with a vastly new 'Butterfly.'"³⁵ Mitropoulos, in his only Stadium appearances of 1947, conducted the entire opera without a score. He served as the New York Philharmonic's music co-advisor (with Leopold Stokowski) during the 1949-50 season before his appointment as sole music director from 1950-57.

During the decade that followed, Mitropoulos led more Stadium performances than any Philharmonic music director or principal conductor. After concert versions of Puccini's *Tosca* on 26 and 27 July 1948, he undertook four concerts in 1949, five in 1951, four in 1952, and four in 1955. Aside from the notable exception of the 21 June 1955 program that featured Ralph Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony and Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, his programs were mostly non-adventurous. On 9 August 1949, Mitropoulos took on the dual role of conductor and pianist performing Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto and winning much critical favor.³⁶ Unfortunately, despite well-received concert operas and his popularity with the orchestra musicians, Mitropoulos's tenure as Philharmonic music director was not a success with the critics. The orchestra's playing fell off in quality under the maestro's somewhat lax leadership. Tired as he was of the frequent attacks from his critics, the conductor was quite happy to yield the podium to Bernstein in 1958.³⁷

Over a period of three days in 1960 (26 to 28 July), Mehta, at age 24, made his first New York appearances, leading the Stadium Symphony Orchestra in two concerts. Three were scheduled; the second was cancelled due to rain. Most of that concert's program was added to the third scheduled concert, thus offering the Stadium audience a lot of music for the price of a single ticket. In the first

³³ John Briggs, "Mitropoulos in Debut At Lewisohn Stadium," *New York Post*, 15 July 1947.

³⁴ *The Brooklyn Citizen*, "'Madam Butterfly' Given At the Lewisohn Stadium," 15 July 1947.

³⁵ Robert Bagar, "Mitropoulos Brilliant Conducting 'Butterfly,'" *New York World-Telegram*, 15 July 1947.

³⁶ Miles Kastendieck, "Mitropoulos Is Terrific," *New York Journal-American*, 10 August 1949.

³⁷ Shanet, Philharmonic, 325-28.

concert, Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony made up the first half while the second consisted of opera arias and Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel*. Giuseppe Di Stefano was the original soloist but he cancelled. Roberta Peters was then approached, but she turned the concert down because she had never heard of Mehta. Finally, Risë Stevens accepted the engagement. The following two programs included such works as Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra, Brahms's First Symphony and two concertos: Schumann's 'Cello Concerto with Aldo Parisot as soloist and Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto with John Browning as soloist.

Mehta received mixed-to-negative notices, despite, by his account, his winning over the orchestra with his podium manner. "They even applauded me at the beginning of the concert," he recalled. *Musical America*'s John Ardoin took Mehta to task for his tempo choices and for his allowing the brass section in the Bartok to be "overdriven." The Tchaikovsky was dismissed by Ardoin: "His ideas are expansive and romantic but are frequently excessive, uncomfortably saccharine." On the other hand, Alan Rich in the *Herald Tribune* felt that the Tchaikovsky was underdone: "its emotional span could have been broadened without risking exaggeration."³⁸

Other Notable Guest Conductors

On 18 and 20 June 1946, George Szell, soon to begin his long and distinguished tenure with the Cleveland Orchestra, made his only Stadium appearances. In his first concert, he led the Philharmonic in Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony (a work he never recorded in Cleveland) and three Wagner excerpts. Two days later, he conducted Brahms's Second Symphony, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with Erica Morini as soloist, and, most intriguingly, William Grant Still's 1943 symphonic poem, *In Memoriam: The Colored Soldiers Who Died For Democracy*. In Cleveland, Szell became notorious for often eschewing contemporary music which he referred to as "temporary music." The Hungarian-born maestro elicited good reviews from the New York press despite some problems with the Stadium amplification system.³⁹ After the first Szell concert, the *New York Post*'s Harriett Johnson wrote, "Mr. Szell looks like a business man and conducts like a seer who has penetrated to the core of his music, knows what every inch of it is about, has the insight to put each part in proper perspective in relation to the whole, and then knits the completed product into a dynamic synthesis."⁴⁰ This observation is well in line with Szell's reputation for somewhat

³⁸ Martin Bookspan and Ross Yackey, *Zubin: The Zubin Mehta Story* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 79-82.

³⁹ Robert Bagar, "Szell Conducts Tchaikovsky Sixth," *New York World-Telegram*, 19 June 1946.

⁴⁰ Harriett Johnson, "Szell Like Toscanini in Debut at Stadium," *New York Post*, 19 June 1946.

intellectualized music-making. Still's composition met with a mixed reception; Arthur V. Berger commented, "I found nothing in the least distinguished in this work, with its static, pentatonic melodic contours and its obvious harmonies in the brass."⁴¹ Bagar noted that the piece "found Mr. Szell in an understanding and sympathetic mood."⁴²

Noted British conductor Sir Adrian Boult led three concerts in 1949 and undertook the first four concerts of the 1954 season. His extensive career included twenty years at the helm of the BBC Symphony Orchestras (1930-50), followed by seven years with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (1950-57). A noted interpreter of most of the major British composers of his day, Boult premiered, among other major works, Gustav Holst's *The Planets* in 1918. Also an advocate of the music of another compatriot, Boult conducted Vaughan Williams's Overture to *The Wasps* on 13 July 1949 and *A London Symphony* on 24 June 1954. He even programmed two American compositions: Paul Creston's *Two Choric Dances*, on 12 June 1949, and William Schuman's *American Festival Overture* on 23 June 1954. Boult also shared the stage with such soloists as Isaac Stern and Claudio Arrau during his 1949 Stadium engagement. His Stadium debut was marred somewhat by the latest attempt at improving the amplification system that, according to Harriett Johnson, resulted in "strident orchestral sounds that made one pray for some protection from the onslaught." In the same review, Johnson noted Boult's significant height and extra-long baton.⁴³

Young American conductor Thomas Schippers stood before the Stadium Symphony Orchestra on 31 July 1952 and 28, 29, and 30 July 1953. His Menotti concerts of 1952 and 1953 are discussed on p. 197. He also led the orchestra in Reznicek's Overture to *Donna Diana*, Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 in E minor, "From the New World," Bizet's Symphony in C major, Ravel's *Pavane pour une Infante défunte*, and Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* on 28 July 1953 and accompanied Gregory Piatigorsky and Isaac Stern in concertos by Saint-Saëns and Mendelssohn the following night. Already, Schippers revealed much maturity despite his youth, and it is unfortunate that he died of cancer in 1977 at age forty-seven, his best years seemingly to come. Francis Perkins wrote of the first 1953 concert in the *Herald Tribune*, "His conducting suggested an unaggressive confidence and knowledge of his scores; it was neat and relevant; he did not waste motion and gesture, and the Stadium Symphony musicians played responsively."⁴⁴ Schippers was mostly an opera conductor during his

⁴¹ Arthur V. Berger, "Erica Morini Is Stadium Soloist," *The New York Sun*, 21 June 1946.

⁴² Robert Bagar, "Erica Morini Plays Mendelssohn Concerto," *New York World-Telegram*, 21 June 1946.

⁴³ Harriett Johnson, "Sir Adrian Boult Makes Stadium Debut," *New York Post*, 12 July 1949.

⁴⁴ Francis D. Perkins, "Schippers Leads Orchestra In Concert at Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 July 1953.

brief career, very much associated with Menotti and Barber, whose *Antony and Cleopatra* he premiered in 1966 on the occasion of the opening of Lincoln Center's Metropolitan Opera House.

In his only Stadium engagement, French-Ukrainian baton leader Igor Markevitch led the first three concerts of the 1957 season. The first concert was terminated early due to rain and the remaining concerts were marred by particularly active airplane traffic.⁴⁵ Two of the three programs featured Tchaikovsky, a composer Markevitch championed throughout the sixties in the concert hall and on disk in a still highly-regarded cycle of the complete symphonies with the London Symphony Orchestra from the sixties. After the 26 June concert, which featured the all-Tchaikovsky program, consisting of the *Nutcracker Suite*, First Piano Concerto with Alexander Brailowsky as soloist, and the Fourth Symphony, originally scheduled for the previous night, Harriett Johnson wrote, "Markevitch approached both concerto and symphony with more sympathy for details than for the broad line."⁴⁶ Markevitch was also a respected composer in his day, although his music is rarely performed today. His famed composition teacher, Nadia Boulanger, was reportedly quite disappointed when Markevitch chose to emphasize conducting over composition.⁴⁷

From 1958 to 1962, one of the most frequent and popular Stadium conductors was Austrian maestro, Josef Krips. Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic and conductor at the Vienna State Opera at the time of his Stadium appearances, Krips attracted good crowds and favorable notices for his yearly Beethoven and Brahms festivals. He led multiple all-Beethoven concerts every year during that five-summer period and took on all-Brahms programs as well in 1961 and 1962. Krips's first Stadium engagement was not without its offstage intrigues. At Robin Hood Dell several days prior to the 26 July 1958 concert of Johann Strauss, Jr. and Mozart, Krips had a falling out with his soloist, Hilde Gueden, with whom he performed the same program in both New York and Philadelphia. It was Minnie Guggenheimer who took it upon herself to fix the breach and the 26 July concert went off without a hitch. Guggenheimer found the strain of dealing with the two temperamental artists so taxing that she stayed home instead of attending the concert.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ William Peper, "Pianist Defeats Airplane Obligation," *New York World-Telegram & Sun*, 26 June 1957.

⁴⁶ Harriett Johnson, "8,000 at Delayed Stadium Opening," *New York Post*, 26 June 1957.

⁴⁷ David Drew and Noël Goodwin, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Igor Markevitch." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁴⁸ Harold C. Schonberg, "Krips and Hilde Gueden Perform Here After a Tense Rehearsal," *The New York Times*, 27 July 1958.

Twenty years after leading his All-American Youth Orchestra at the Stadium (and two days after Mehta's Stadium debut concerts), Leopold Stokowski conducted his only true Lewisohn Stadium concert, performing with the Stadium Symphony Orchestra three of his own Bach transcriptions, Brahms's Second Symphony, and Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* and "Dance of the Seven Veils" from his opera, *Salome*. The concert was scheduled for 30 July but was postponed to the following day due to bad weather. The change in schedule was given as a reason for the disappointing turnout of about 4,000 music lovers. Stokowski had less luck with the airplanes than did most of the Stadium conductors, feeling compelled to stop the music five times! According to Perkins, the usual hallmarks of the Stokowski approach to music-making were in evidence despite the environmental sounds: "there was exceptional brilliance of tone and vividness of color. Occasionally there seemed to be a departure from an ideal tonal balance, when the lower-toned brasses seemed rather too prominent in the musical background."⁴⁹

Finally, on 9 July 1963, Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa made his Stadium debut with a program of Bernstein's *Candide* Overture, Saint-Saëns's Second Piano Concerto, and Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. The concert attracted favorable press for Ozawa and raves for the soloist in the Saint-Saëns Second Piano Concerto, seventeen-year-old André Watts. Several critics regretted Watts's upstaging of Ozawa, which was probably no fault of his own.⁵⁰ Ozawa, known to New York audiences after having served as the Philharmonic's Assistant Conductor during the 1961-62 season, was discovered by Bernstein in Berlin, where he was studying with Herbert von Karajan. On the basis of his youthful conducting, Bernstein offered Ozawa the Philharmonic position.⁵¹

The talented young Ozawa proved his mettle again the following night with an all-Russian program. Alan Rich of *The New York Times* felt that Ozawa "showed that there is a great deal more to him than flash" even if the conductor was "still trying out proper tempos for certain sections" in the Tchaikovsky Fourth Symphony.⁵² Ozawa conducted two concerts during the 1964 season, leading the Stadium Symphony Orchestra in the first American performance of Kiyoshige Koyama's *Kobiki-Uta* on 5 August and accompanying his wife, Kyoko Edo-Ozawa, in Saint-Saëns's Fifth Piano Concerto the next night.

⁴⁹ Francis D. Perkins, "Planes Drive Stokowski To Halt Music 5 Times," *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 August 1960.

⁵⁰ William Bender, "Brilliance of Watts Overshadows a Debut," *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 July 1963.

⁵¹ José Bowen, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Seiji Ozawa." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁵² Alan Rich, "Music: Ozawa Is Cheered at Stadium," *The New York Times*, 11 July 1963.

Other Stadium Conductors

There were many Stadium conductors from 1946 to 1964, despite the decrease in the number of concerts. “Principal conductors” were responsible for four to five engagements in a season while “guest conductors” were scheduled for one or two.

Seven Frequent Stadium Conductors⁵³

The first seven conductors discussed here were the ones who established significant ties with Lewisohn Stadium in the form of either somewhat lengthy engagements and/or annual appearances over many seasons. Hans Schwieger conducted four concerts in both 1947 and 1948, plus two in 1964. Highlights of these concerts include his sharing the stage with pianist-composer Alec Templeton on 21 July 1947 and with soprano Helen Traubel on 24 July of that same year in an all-Wagner program. Schwieger was the Music Director of the Kansas City Philharmonic from 1938 to 1971.⁵⁴ Alfredo Antonini appeared at least once every season from 1948 to 1964. Each summer, he was entrusted the task of directing a concert devoted to Italian opera arias and excerpts featuring stars from the Met. In 1954, Antonini presided over three concerts, leading the José Greco Dance Company on 5 July, a symphonic concert on 6 July, and an opera night on 17 July. Three years later, on 18 July 1957, he led Greco’s dance troupe again. On 19 July 1960, he and the Stadium Symphony Orchestra accompanied Benny Goodman in his second and last Stadium appearance.⁵⁵ After Antonini conducted Paul Creston’s *Dance Overture*, they performed Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto. Most interesting was his 4 July 1961 concert—one of four that season—which featured music by Creston’s *Dance Overture*, Riegger’s *Dance Rhythms* and *Romanza* for String Orchestra, and Schuman’s “Chester” from *New England Triptych*. Antonini was Music Director of CBS Television for thirty years and an international guest conductor.⁵⁶

Austrian-born conductor Julius Rudel directed at least one concert each season from 1953 to 1964, with the exception of the 1960 season. In most of

⁵³ The repertoire discussed below is that which was programmed; in some cases, a piece may not have been performed due to the weather.

⁵⁴ Jack L. Ralston, Scott Cantrell and Bradford Robinson, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Kansas City.” London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001.

⁵⁵ In the first half of the concert, after Antonini conducted Paul Creston’s *Dance Overture*, they performed Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto. The concert’s second half was devoted to Benny Goodman’s Sextet and Trio, the Stadium Symphony Orchestra vacating the stage for them.

⁵⁶ <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10C1EF73C5D0C768CDDA80994DB484D81&scp=1&sq=Alfredo+Antonini&st=nyt>

these performances, the program was a concert version of either an operetta or an opera. On 26 July 1956, he directed Verdi's *Rigoletto* in concert form. Highlights of Rudel's 1964 concerts include his sharing the stage with Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale on 30 June, in performances of two-piano concertos by Mendelssohn and Poulenc; a program of Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, Stravinsky's Suite from *The Firebird*, and Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony on 1 July; and an evening with soprano Anna Moffo on 9 July. Rudel was Music Director of the New York City Opera from 1957 to 1979 and of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra from 1979 to 1986.⁵⁷

Thomas Scherman led many concerts from 1954 to 1960, including five in 1954. On 12 July of that year, he conducted Morton Gould's *Tap Dance Concerto* in its New York premiere with Danny Daniels as soloist. The following season, one of his three engagements was accompanying the Royal Danish Ballet (on 21 July). Most of the time, Scherman conducted concert operas and symphonic concerts. He was the music director of the Little Orchestra Society of New York from 1947 to 1975.⁵⁸

Alfred Wallenstein took the podium for an average of three concerts each year; in 1959, he led the Verdi *Requiem* (13 July); in 1960, he conducted Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* (4 August), in 1963, he conducted the Van Cliburn concert (25 June) and Beethoven's Ninth (27 June). A former principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic, he was the music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra from 1943 to 1956 and the principal conductor of the Symphony of the Air from 1961 to 1963.⁵⁹

Joseph Rosenstock led three concerts in 1962, five in 1963, and five in 1964, usually in non-adventurous fare. One highlight was an all-Richard Strauss evening with Phyllis Curtin on 28 July 1964.

Lastly, Salvatore Dell'Isola conducted the annual, season-ending (in most cases) Rodgers and Hammerstein concert each season from 1949 to 1964. An Italian-born conductor, he won several Tony awards for his musical direction of a number of Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals, including *South Pacific* (1949) and *Pipe Dream* (1955).⁶⁰

Other notable conductors who appeared at the Stadium on fewer occasions than the seven discussed above include German-born maestro Max Rudolf,

⁵⁷ Lyman, *Great Jews in Music*, 287-88.

⁵⁸ Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, "Guide to the Thomas Scherman Papers, 1945-1979," <http://www.nypl.org/research/lpa/mus/pdf/MusScher.pdf>

⁵⁹ Lyman, *Great Jews in Music*, 235-36.

⁶⁰ *The New York Times*, "Salvatore Dell'Isola, Musical Director, 88," <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE1DD1038F935A25750C0A96F948260>.

who led Johann Strauss, Jr.'s *Die Fledermaus* in concert form on 5 July 1951; *Carmen* on 22 July 1957; and symphonic concerts on 23 and 24 July. Finally, in 1958, he conducted three symphonic evenings made up exclusively of German warhorses. A well-known conductor at the Met (1945-58; 1973-75) and of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (1958-1969), Rudolf later wrote a still highly-regarded book entitled *The Grammar of Conducting*.⁶¹

Four seasons prior to Rudolf's first Stadium engagement, Bernard Hermann, Chief Conductor, CBS Symphony Orchestra from 1942 to 1959 and veteran film score composer, undertook three concerts. An advocate of British music, he performed Ralph Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* on 28 July 1947 and his own *Welles Raises Kane* the following evening.⁶² Howard Mitchell appeared only during the 1956 season. Of his four concerts that summer, the most notable was an all-American evening on 4 July featuring music by Sousa, Creston's Second Symphony, two excerpts from Randall Thompson's choral work *Testament of Freedom*, and Copland's *A Lincoln Portrait* with stage and screen actor Raymond Massey as narrator, as well as choral arrangements of traditional songs. He is best remembered for his years as music director of the National Symphony Orchestra (1949-1969).⁶³ Austrian violinist and conductor Willi Boskovsky led one Stadium concert, presiding over the 11 July 1963 Viennese night which featured, in her first Stadium appearance, Elisabeth Schwartzkopf as soloist. One of the leaders of the Vienna Philharmonic, he was conductor of the Vienna Strauss Orchestra, in which capacity he led the Vienna New Year's Concert every year from 1954 to his death.⁶⁴ Arthur Fiedler had two engagements in 1964; on 2 July, an all-Tchaikovsky evening, consisting of shorter works and the Violin Concerto with Mischa Elman as soloist, and two nights later, the all-Gershwin concert.

Composer-Conductors

During these last seasons at the Stadium, various composers conducted their own music. On 4 July 1950, thirty-year-old Frederic Balazs led the New York premiere of his own *An American Symphony (Based on Mottoes by Walt Whitman)* in a program that also included music by Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture), Liszt's

⁶¹ Lyman, *Great Jews in Music*, 288

⁶² David Cooper, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Bernard Herrman." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁶³ Katherine Preston, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Howard Mitchell." London: Macmillan, 2001.

⁶⁴ Leslie East, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Willi Boskovsky." London: Macmillan, 2001.

Tasso: Lamento e Trionfo, Wieniawski's Second Violin Concerto with Harry Shub as soloist, and Bartok's *Dance Suite*. Four seasons later, on 26 July 1954, Virgil Thomson conducted the suite from his film score to *Louisiana Story* and excerpts from his opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, as well as music by Barber and Copland. Hector Villa-Lobos led a program of his music that also included Alberto Ginastera's overture to *The Creole Faust* on 8 July 1957. Aaron Copland, on 16 July 1964, also led an evening devoted to his creations. Concerts conducted by Igor Stravinsky, Sir William Walton, and Carlos Chavez are discussed below.

Symphonic and Operatic Repertoire

As the Stadium Concerts drew to a close, their symphonic repertoire became less and less adventurous, with greater emphasis on the tried-and-true, while the search for an American serious composer to join the ranks of Gershwin was all but abandoned. After a period during which America took the lead in preserving and building upon the serious music legacy, Europe rebuilt steadily and appeared poised to take back the mantle from America. As an unnamed writer from *Musical America* commented in 1951:

Routine orchestra programs and appearances by popular celebrities at Tanglewood, the Lewisohn Stadium, Robin Hood Dell, Ravinia, and the Hollywood Bowl offer decidedly less enticement to those in search of a musical vacation than the festivals at Bayreuth, Salzburg, Perpignan, London, Edinburgh, or Aix-en-Provence.

Nor is the unfavorable contrast between our musical offerings and those of Europe a peculiarity of the summer festival season. Granting that New York, by exception to the rule, provides as wide a range of music—except opera—as can be heard anywhere in the world, American musical endeavor tends to become more and more of a play-safe affair, as impecunious institutions seek to balance their books.

This is a gloomy situation. Have we passed through our one brief period of progressive world leadership in music, only to retreat in the face of Europe's superior initiative?⁶⁵

It is beyond the scope of this book to explore whether America has lost world leadership in music, assuming it has ever had it. As far as Lewisohn Stadium during its last two decades was concerned, the excitement, such that it was, lay more in the performers than in the music performed.

⁶⁵ *Musical America*, "Will American Music Lose World Leadership?" 7 June 1951.

Again, Beethoven, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky led the way. The annual Gershwin concerts continued to attract huge audiences.⁶⁶ Most intriguing was the decline in enthusiasm for the music of Wagner. The German master dominated the concerts given at the Stadium during its first two and one-half decades. But toward the end, fewer Wagner concerts were given, although those concerts often featured the finest Wagnerian singers. The 17 June 1948 program that showcased Met soloists Rose Bampton and Set Svanholm in their Stadium debuts under the direction of Reiner attracted a very small turnout despite fine weather.⁶⁷

As the Stadium Concerts headed into the sixties, lighter fare became more desired and attracted larger crowds. This is not to say, however, that the Stadium Concerts retreated from the classics and the modern entirely. Despite the proliferation of pops concerts, the classics continued to be emphasized, while, from time to time, contemporary music crept into the programs.

In terms of the latter, the 1946 season featured several concerts of interest. On 21 June, Walter Hendl led the Philharmonic in Peter Mennin's *Folk Overture*, Morton Gould's *Spirituals* for String Choir and Orchestra, and William Schuman's *Side Show for Orchestra*, concluding the evening with Shostakovich's First Symphony. Five evenings later, Alexander Smallens directed performances of Prokofiev's Classical Symphony), Copland's Suite from *Appalachian Spring*, Milhaud's *Suite Française* and Sibelius's Second Symphony. On 4 July, Smallens shared the stage with the Hall Johnson Negro Choir and sprinkled the program with Schuman's *William Billings Overture*, Frederick Jacobi's Four Dances from *The Prodigal Son*, and Antheil's *Over the Plains*. Several of Laszlo Halasz's concerts were ambitious. On 8 July, he presented Zoltán Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* for soloists, chorus and orchestra. Two days later, he led the Philharmonic in Copland's *An Outdoor Overture*, Blitzstein's Suite from the film, *Native Land*, Delius's "La Calinda" Dance from the opera, *Koanga*, and Ravel's *Boléro*. None of the compositions performed at these concerts was dissonant and challenging but they do reveal that, at least as of 1946, the Stadium Concerts did not totally shy away from music of the twentieth century.

During these final two decades, programs devoted entirely to single living or recent composers were offered, several of them led by the composers themselves. Three Kurt Weill programs were held. On 30 July 1949, Maurice Abravanel led soloists, a chorus, and the Philharmonic in music from *Lady in the Dark* (arranged by Robert Russell Bennett) and highlights from *Street Scene*. The *Daily Compass's* Albert J. Elias hailed *Street Scene* as "never dull to the ear" but

⁶⁶ Louis Biancolli, "Gershwin Concert Attracts 20,000," *New York World-Telegram*, 8 July 1949.

⁶⁷ Robert A. Hague, "Musical Diary," *PM*, 21 June 1948.

felt “that the music and the lyrics and the drama are in two completely different styles of expression.”⁶⁸ The concert was halted during the Act II excerpts by rain.⁶⁹ The following season, on 10 July, an estimated 10,000 attended a memorial concert conducted by Maurice Levine in tribute to the recently deceased Weill. It featured vocal selections from *Lost in the Stars*, the complete *Down in the Valley*, several standards sung by Todd Duncan and Virginia Paris, and a spoken tribute to Weill by his Broadway librettist, Maxwell Anderson. Sadly, *Down in the Valley* was marred by poor staging and unimpressive soloists. Douglas Watt found the performance “so poor as to make it seem almost a burlesque of Western-type musicals. The principals were entirely inadequate to the simple demands of the music and the chorus was ill-rehearsed.”⁷⁰ Elias concurred with Watts’s scathing remarks and opined:

Part of the trouble which lies in Weill’s stage productions and which may, I suspect, have been at the bottom of the inept production of the one-act opera the other evening, is the fact that the composer never really was adroit, never really succeeded at fusing music and drama. He never seemed to keep both going at the same time. And, consequently, to trump up stage action which keeps the piece from coasting to a standstill, but which becomes an integral part, is no easy matter.⁷¹

A third Weill concert took place on 31 July 1958, the first half consisting of excerpts from various shows, the second devoted exclusively to *The Threepenny Opera*, with his widow, Lotte Lenya, one of the featured soloists.

Several all-Menotti programs were led by Thomas Schippers in the early fifties. On 31 July 1952, excerpts from a few of his operas were balanced by the Italian-born composer’s Piano Concerto, with Byron Janis as soloist, and music from his ballet, *Sebastian*. *The New York Times* had higher praise for the opera excerpts than for the concerto, which reminded the critic somewhat of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony. He praised Schippers for his sympathetic conducting: “The measure of a conductor is his performance in unfamiliar music, rather than repertory items the musicians know backward. By this standard Mr. Schippers’ performance was very fine indeed.”⁷² On 30 July 1953, Schippers returned with another all-Menotti concert, this time with the composer’s Violin Concerto as well as opera arias and excerpts. Menotti later composed a fanfare for the opening night of the 1965 Lewisohn Stadium season, which took place on 21 June 1965.

⁶⁸ Albert J. Elias, “‘Street’ at Stadium Has Split Personality,” *Daily Compass*, 1 August 1949.

⁶⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Stadium Concert Devoted To Kurt Weill Program,” 1 August 1949.

⁷⁰ Douglas Watt, “Weill Concert Draws 10,000 To Stadium,” *New York Daily News*, 13 July 1950.

⁷¹ Albert J. Elias, “Inept Staging Hurts Kurt Weill Memorial,” *The Daily Compass*, 14 July 1950.

⁷² *The New York Times*, “Schippers Leads Menotti Program,” 1 August 1952.

In the early sixties, two major composer-conductors led the Stadium Symphony Orchestra in their musical offerings. On 12 July 1962, Igor Stravinsky shared the podium with his biographer, interpreter and promoter, Robert Craft, the latter beginning the program with *Fireworks* and *Le Sacre du Printemps*, the former following intermission with *Scherzo à la Russe*, *Scherzo Fantastique*, and the *Firebird Suite*. Perhaps wisely, both men shunned the serial works of Stravinsky's later period. The critics and the audience were far more receptive to *Le Sacre* than were those from nearly four decades earlier. The following season, on 8 August, Sir William Walton, making his New York conducting debut,⁷³ led the Stadium Symphony Orchestra in a number of his creations, most of them short and light works with the Violin Concerto being the exception; Berl Senofsky was the soloist. Unfortunately, at least according to one critic, the Stadium Symphony musicians did not give their best on this occasion, while Walton's conducting was minimalist to the point of being non-existent. As Miles Kastendieck wrote, "Instead of sitting up and making an exceptional effort, the musicians sat back, read through their scores, and for the most part let things go at that. Occasionally they perked up and helped impart some of the flavor Sir William's music has."⁷⁴ His colleague at *The New York Times*, Raymond Ericson, however, had little trouble with the orchestral playing, but, among other things, noted the disappointingly small turnout—an audience estimated at 3,500. He wrote, "It was a good concert, an enjoyable one and a tribute to the stadium management's fresh ideas in programing this year. Unfortunately, there were few takers."⁷⁵

From the standpoint of the somewhat new and somewhat challenging, there were a handful of other notable evenings. On 17 July 1952, in an all-Italian program, the *Gloria* from Puccini's little-known *Mass* received its New York premiere under the direction of Alfredo Antonini with the Collegiate Chorale and Jan Peerce as the tenor soloist. Paul Affelder had high praise for this rare non-operatic Puccini creation: "This section, at least, is fresh and inspiring, despite the fact that it has an almost secular quality."⁷⁶ A few days later, on 25 July 1952, the Stadium Symphony performed the only Second Viennese School composition ever heard at Lewisohn Stadium, Schönberg's tonal and chromatic *Verklärte Nacht*. Unfortunately, according to the Harold Schonberg, the performance needed more rehearsal.⁷⁷

⁷³ Aside from a brief appearance in a 1955 United Nations concert.

⁷⁴ Miles Kastendieck, "Musicians Let Walton Down," *New York Journal American*, 9 August 1963.

⁷⁵ Raymond Ericson, "Music: Walton at Lewisohn Stadium," *The New York Times*, 10 August 1963. The program featured violinist Berl Senofsky and consisted of the following works: the Johannesburg Festival Overture; Concerto for Violin and Orchestra; Suite from the Ballet *The Wise Virgins* (arr. from music of J. S. Bach); Excerpts from *Façaade* Suites I and II; Coronation March, 1937: "Crown Imperial"

⁷⁶ Paul Affelder, "Forgotten Puccini Mass Premiered at Stadium [*sic*]," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 18 July 1952.

⁷⁷ Harold C. Schonberg, "Schoenberg Work Heard At Stadium," *The New York Times*, 26 July 1952.

During the fifties, two concerts of Latin and South American works were given. On 25 June 1953, Leonard Bernstein, in the concert's first half, conducted Copland's *Danzon Cubano*, Camargo Guarnieri's *Three Brazilian Dances* and Hector Villa-Lobos's Fourth Piano Concerto. The second half was taken up exclusively by music by Peruvian composer Moises Vivanco, much of it featuring his wife, vocalist Yma Sumac, as soloist. Six years later, on 21 July 1959, Carlos Chavez conducted Ginastera's Overture to *The Creole Faust*, Revueletas's *Sensemayá*, and Villa-Lobos Concerto No. 2 in A minor for Violincello and Orchestra, with the work's dedicatee, Aldo Parisot, as soloist, as well as his own suite from his ballet, *H. P.* The concert, well-received by the New York critics, was sponsored by New York's Spanish-language newspaper, *El Diario*. The editor of the paper, Stanley Ross, was introduced at intermission by Minnie Guggenheimer as, "Stanley Ross, whoever he is. What the H are you?"⁷⁸

Lastly, on 4 August 1960, Stadium audiences were treated to the Stadium's first and only performance of Carl Orff's scenic cantata *Carmina Burana*. As Francis D. Perkins pointed out, the work was not entirely a novelty in New York even then, having had four prior performances, including one at the City Opera the previous year.⁷⁹ Alfred Wallenstein stood on the podium, although the chorus was prepared by longtime Chicago Symphony Chorus director, Margaret Hillis. The performance was well-received despite some critical misgivings about several of the soloists.

Pops And Other Repertoire

Even before the 1946 season, the Stadium Concerts' devotion to winter season fare was showing signs of wear and tear. There were concerts devoted to opera highlights and the Strauss family as well as operetta nights conducted by operetta composers Sigmund Romberg and Robert Stolz. And, of course, there were the concerts in which the first half was performed by the Philharmonic, the other half given over to such acts as Paul Robeson and the Hall Johnson Choir, both of which performed negro spirituals and occasional popular standards. However, save for the Frank Sinatra and Dinah Shore concerts during the World War Two era, the Stadium Concerts did not take the plunge into true popular fare until their final decades. While most of the concerts remained Carnegie Hall-like in their scope, each summer from the late-forties to 1964 had at least one show that crossed the line.

⁷⁸ John Briggs, "Music: Chavez Conducts," *The New York Times*, 22 July 1959.

⁷⁹ Francis D. Perkins, "'Carmina Burana' Features Lewisohn Stadium Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 August 1960.

By 1957, the critics acknowledged the trend. In the 23 June 1957 issue of the *Lynchburg Virginia News*, Sigmund Spaeth noted the emergence of popular concerts at Lewisohn Stadium, as well as at Ravinia, the Hollywood Bowl, Robin Hood Dell, and Watergate, among other summer venues. "The astute 'Minnie' Guggenheimer, discovered long ago that well-known interpreters of the lighter type of music were absolutely essential as a commercial balance to the conventional Carnegie Hall repertoire, even when performed by outstanding artists under world-famous conductors."⁸⁰ The popular concerts, usually held on Saturday evenings, met with mostly excellent box office returns. Some critics, however, regretted the direction the Stadium Concerts had taken. As Miles Kastendieck wrote in the *New York Journal -American*:

Obviously, the reason [for the popular concerts] is to attract the largest audiences possible for the good of the box office. On the whole the popular event has paid off. Stadium Concerts must not sell itself short. What is needed is an entirely new approach or some kind of re-affirmation of its symphonic policy.⁸¹

The new approach never came about. The Stadium Concerts, increasingly fewer in number as the years went on, remained committed to alternating routine symphonic fare with lighter fare, the serious aspirations of previous decades all but forgotten.

As mentioned earlier, operetta nights and Italian nights had been held from time to time in the years prior to 1946. On 22 June 1946, Paul Lavalie juxtaposed such light music as arrangements of songs by Kern, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and Herbert with semi-challenging orchestral music by Enesco (*Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1*), Poulenc (Two-piano Concerto), and Prokofiev (excerpts from his suite from *The Love of Three Oranges*), as well as his own music, the *Symphonic Rhumba*. On 26 July 1947, Lavalie offered a similar program. Blind jazz-pianist Alec Templeton treated the Stadium audience to "Impressions and Improvisations" for solo piano following a 21 July 1947 program that included his *Concertino Lirico*, Dvorak's "New World" Symphony, Shostakovich's Suite from *The Golden Age*, and Tchaikovsky's *March Slav*, all conducted by Hans Schwieger. However, it was not until the final concert of the 1948 season that the Stadium Concerts made its sharpest turn away from Carnegie Hall.

On 7 August of that year, the last concert of the season, the Stadium hosted the first of what would come to be an annual event: an evening devoted to highlights from the musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein. This particular concert, held at the behest of Minnie Guggenheimer, featured songs from the

⁸⁰ Sigmund Spaeth, "Spaeth On Music," *Lynchburg (VA) News*, 23 June 1957.

⁸¹ Mile Kastendieck, "Stadium Needs New Policy," *New York Journal-American*, 10 August 1958.

shows *Allegro*, *Carousel*, and *Oklahoma!*, songs from the movie *State Fair*, as well as several symphonic arrangements by Robert Russell Bennett. Alexander Smallens was on the podium. The soloists were Annamary Dickey, soprano; Thomas Haywood, tenor; Gladys Swarthout, mezzo; and Robert Weede, baritone. The chorus from the production of *Allegro* assisted. "The impression persisted," wrote Irving Kolodin, "not merely from the size of the audience but from its undercurrent humming to one favorite strain after another, that the Stadium has found a hardy perennial to supplement the garden spot named 'Gershwin.'"⁸² Indeed, it had. From 1948 on, each summer featured a Rodgers and Hammerstein evening, usually as the final concert of the season. After the initial Smallens-led concert of 1948, the baton was waved by Salvatore Dell'Isola on each occasion. On 7 August 1948, however, Smallens shared the podium with Rodgers himself, who led the orchestra in highlights from *Oklahoma!* "I'm glad this happened while I'm still alive," he told the audience at intermission.⁸³ As the years progressed, new shows such as *The King and I* and *South Pacific*, along with several of the shows excerpted in 1948, were highlighted to large, enthusiastic crowds. During the fifties, there also were evenings devoted to Jerome Kern and Hammerstein, Gilbert and Sullivan, Lerner and Loewe, and Irving Berlin, among others.

Another Stadium tradition began on 14 July 1956, when Louis Armstrong and his All-Stars shared the stage with The Dave Brubeck Quartet, and, at the end, with Leonard Bernstein and the Stadium Symphony Orchestra in Antonini's arrangement of "St. Louis Blues," in the first annual Jazz Jamboree. Organized by George Avakian, Eastern Director of Popular Albums for Columbia Records, where both Armstrong and Brubeck were on the roster, the concert, according to Avakian, promised what he somewhat bombastically considered an overview of jazz history. As he wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune*:

Saturday night at Lewisohn Stadium, Louis Armstrong will thus represent the whole flowering of jazz, from its earliest form as he knew it in his boyhood days in New Orleans, to its function as America's language of communication to all the world. In Dave Brubeck, the new voices of jazz are heard – partly in the mainstream, partly in a personal world of their own. Together, they are jazz personified – jazz of yesterday, of today and even of tomorrow.⁸⁴

At least one critic was not impressed by the concert's vacuous pretensions. *The Times's* John S. Wilson, while noting the sellout crowd, wrote disparagingly of the proceedings. He praised Armstrong's playing in the Antonini arrangement as "movingly expressed and beautifully developed." Then he commented:

⁸² Irving Kolodin, "20,000 Attend Last Stadium Concert," *The New York Sun*, 9 August 1948.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ George Avakian, "Jazz Concert at the Stadium," *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 July 1956.

Brief as [the Antonini] was, this was a refreshing change from the Armstrong performances that have been heard here recently. For several years his group has limited itself, both in concert and in night club appearances, to repetitions of a set program that rarely varies.

Saturday night's audience at Lewisohn Stadium heard the same program that he had played several times in New York. They applauded it enthusiastically, attempted to clap in time with one number and even made a brief attempt to dance in the aisles.

Unfortunately, the stimulus for all this was rather shoddy jazz, although it may have had its merits as vaudeville. Mr. Armstrong is now held so rigidly to a pre-set pattern that he rarely plays with the extemporaneous creativity that is generally considered an essential element of jazz.

It is somewhat disturbing to realize that the Armstrong group's performances are being seen all over the world and are widely publicized as outstanding examples of the propaganda value of American jazz. There is no question of Mr. Armstrong's merits as an entertainer. It is natural that audiences in all countries should be drawn to him, just as the one at Lewisohn Stadium was. But, except for occasional instances, it would be misleading if the antics of Armstrong and his colleagues were to be accepted as representative of well-played jazz.⁸⁵

Perhaps the true merits of the first Stadium Jazz Jamboree fell between the extremes represented by the articles of Avakian and Wilson. Whatever the case, enough Stadium-goers were pleased by the results, and other Jazz Jamborees, none of which involved the Stadium Symphony Orchestra, were held in the summers of 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, and 1964, featuring such talents as George Shearing, Erroll Garner, Anita O'Day, Lionel Hampton, Dizzy Gillespie, Gerry Mulligan, Stan Getz and further appearances by Armstrong. Just before the 1959 Jazz Jamboree concert, Armstrong had a heart attack in Spoleto early that summer. Initially, it appeared that he would not be able to make it to Lewisohn Stadium for the 4 July affair, which was his ceremonial birthday. But the jazz great showed up unannounced and played for about fifteen minutes. He declared, "I didn't come here to prove I'm not sick. I came just to play."⁸⁶

A humorous incident preceded Satchmo's first Stadium concert. Despite his well-known love for jazz, Bernstein, according to Armstrong, may have been a little shaky about performing with the jazz great. In discussing the performance with him prior to the concert, Bernstein said to Armstrong, "Now when you get to this cadenza, and you get a little nervous, well, just shorten it." Not knowing

⁸⁵ John S. Wilson, "Music: Jazz Is Tested at Stadium," *The New York Times*, 16 July 1956.

⁸⁶ Laurence Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997), 475.

what Bernstein meant by “nervous,” Armstrong simply said, “Okay, daddy.” As he later recalled, “Well, I warm up at home, I hit the stage, I’m ready. From the first rehearsal on, we wailed. Well, from then on, he got confidence; it don’t take long for a person to relax once they hear me go down with the arrangement. After that, he got himself straightened. After the performance he liked to shake my hand off.”⁸⁷ In the audience that night was the then-blind, eighty-two-year-old composer of the “St. Louis Blues,” W. C. Handy; he was moved to tears by the performance.⁸⁸

Jazz at Lewisohn Stadium proved popular enough that, in 1958, two jazz concerts were presented. After the 5 July concert featuring Armstrong, O’Day, and Hampton, et al., Duke Ellington and Gerry Mulligan shared the stage on 24 July. Aided by eight extra percussionists, some of whom were from the Stadium Symphony Orchestra, Ellington introduced a novelty entitled *Royal Grand Batterie*. Wilson did not consider the work among Ellington’s most memorable but dubbed the two sections of music “brief attractive novelties” that were “worth-while additions to his repertory.” The rest of Ellington’s set comprised familiar standards by Ellington and/or Billy Strayhorn. The concert attracted an estimated 9,500, with somewhat threatening weather partially to blame for the less-than-capacity crowd.⁸⁹

Other notable popular acts appeared at the City College campus during the fifties. On 19 July 1951, over two decades after her celebrated on-screen partner, Nelson Eddy, made his Stadium debut, Jeanette MacDonald was the soloist with Smallens and the orchestra. She combined popular standards, some of which were accompanied by pianist Collins Smith, with such arias as the “Jewel Song” from Gounod’s *Faust*. MacDonald was rapturously received by both the reasonably-sized audience and the orchestra musicians.⁹⁰ The *New York Herald Tribune* noted however, that MacDonald, not particularly used to performing outdoors, did force her voice at times.⁹¹

Five summers later, Harry Belafonte attracted an estimated 25,000 to Lewisohn Stadium with his story-telling and folk songs that covered the gamut from spirituals like “Water Boy” to Hebrew songs. At intermission, Guggenheimer declared, “Harry Belafonte has broken all stadium records tonight.” The first half of the concert featured Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev’s Classical Symphony, and De Falla’s Three Dances from *The Three-Cornered Hat*, performed by the Stadium Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Julius

⁸⁷ Ricky Riccardi, *What a wonderful World: The Magic of Louis Armstrong’s Later Years* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), 124-25.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ John S. Wilson, “Music: Duke Ellington at the Stadium,” *The New York Times*, 25 July 1958.

⁹⁰ Harriett Johnson, “MacDonald Sings Stadium Debut,” *New York Post*, 22 July 1951.

⁹¹ *New York Herald Tribune*, “Jeanette MacDonald Is Soloist at Stadium,” 22 July 1951.

Rudel. Dubbing Rudel's task "a thankless job," Harriett Johnson reported that "Hundreds came late and others shouted in annoyance at the miscellaneous disturbances. Few listened and those who wanted to had a hard time of it."⁹² Belafonte received raves all across the board. Louis Biancolli wrote, "The style was a hearty blend of crooning and incantation, of soft serenading and wild lament, of sly calypso innuendo and somber gravel-toned drama. Behind it was the warm and dynamic personality of a first-class showman and actor who happened to be a born story-teller, too."⁹³ This was Belafonte's only Stadium performance. Four years later, 16 July 1960, the Belafonte Folk Singers—*sans* Belafonte himself—appeared at the Stadium.

Lastly, songbird Eartha Kitt performed twice at the Stadium—11 July 1959 and 9 July 1960. Like Belafonte, Kitt's wide repertoire encompassed international folk tunes and Broadway favorites. After the 1959 concert, Harold Schonberg praised Kitt but found fault with the orchestral arrangements, performed by the Stadium Symphony under Maurice Levine's direction, that backed her up:

Miss Kitt, a brilliant entertainer and a thorough artist, went through her material with finesse. Something less could be said of the rather tasteless orchestral arrangements that backed her up. They were slick and tended toward vulgarity. It is a tribute to Miss Kitt that her strong personality soared far above the backgrounds.⁹⁴

Mention should be made of the various dance companies, such as the New York City Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet and others who performed at the Stadium during these years. Particularly popular was the José Greco Dance Company, specialists in Spanish dance that routinely attracted large crowds for their semi-annual appearances throughout the fifties and early sixties. They actually made their first Stadium appearance on 12 July 1943, with José Iturbi on the podium, then began a new run of performances with their second Stadium show on 21 July 1953. The 1953 performance, however, was marred by tragedy. Regular conductor Miguel Sandoval was stricken with a fatal heart attack during the rehearsals and was replaced by the company's pianist, Roger Machado, and violinist Arthur Schuller. The show went on as scheduled.⁹⁵

⁹² Harriett Johnson, "Belafonte Breaks Stadium Record," *New York Post*, 29 June 1956.

⁹³ Louis Biancolli, "Balladeer Belafonte Is Sellout at Stadium," *New York World Telegram and Sun*, 29 June 1956.

⁹⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, "Eartha Kitt Is Soloist," *The New York Times*, 13 July 1959.

⁹⁵ Walter Terry, "José Greco Company," *New York Herald Tribune*, 22 July 1953.

Soloists

Among the 1946 soloists was a youthful performer of great interest. Fourteen-year-old pianist-composer Philippa Duke Schuyler, a Harlem native born to black conservative author, George S. Schuyler, and his caucasian wife, Josephine, appeared with Thor Johnson and the Philharmonic on 13 July of that year performing Saint-Saëns's Second Piano Concerto. Schuyler was the first black American pianist ever to solo at the Stadium. Only one other black pianist, André Watts, performed at the Stadium after her; as noted earlier, he also performed the Saint-Saëns's Second Piano Concerto. The orchestra played the Scherzo from Schuyler's symphony inspired by the tale, *Rumpelstiltskin*. The *New York Journal-American* praised her rendering of the solo part of the concerto, writing of the "rhythmic incisiveness of the concerto's first movement, the phraseological sureness of the second and the brilliancy of the concluding presto."⁹⁶ The same critic also hailed the scherzo: "The composition revealed innate musicality of high order. She also showed imaginative insight as well as feeling for construction."⁹⁷ Other critics were similarly impressed, Robert Bagar writing in the *World-Telegram*, "She is obviously the type of 'wunderkind' who will grow with the years."⁹⁸

Schuyler's debut, which was warmly received by the estimated 12,000 audience members as well as the critics, was not without moments of extra stress for the young musician. On top of the unimaginable nervousness she must have felt over appearing with the New York Philharmonic in front of so many people, Schuyler had to deal with the fact that the Stadium Committee failed to order a piano for her and did not tell her family to do so either. As a result, with Johnson doing his best to make her feel comfortable, Schuyler was forced to rehearse with an out-of-tune piano brought out from backstage. Attempts to find a suitable piano before the Saturday rehearsal were further sabotaged by the moving union's contract, which stated that their members did not work on weekends. Finally, Schuyler's family contacted Philippa's first harmony teacher, who had a family member in the trucking business. The piano arrived a half hour before the concert, leaving time only for a tuning. Nonetheless, the concert was a success, Johnson later writing to Schuyler, "So many wonderful remarks were made concerning your exceptional player and your genuine compositions . . . that I continue to feel especially fortunate in having had the opportunity of appearing with you on that memorable evening."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *New York Journal-American*, "Miss Schuyler At the Stadium," 15 July 1946.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Robert Bagar, "Composer-Pianist, 15, Wins Stadium Plaudits," *New York World-Telegram*, 15 July 1946.

⁹⁹ Kathryn Talalay, *Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 105-07.

Sadly, Schuyler's life was, apparently, a tragic one. Schuyler later died in a plane crash in Vietnam while pursuing a career in journalism.¹⁰⁰ The prodigy made a second Stadium appearance on 20 July 1955, performing the same concerto. Thomas Scherman led the Stadium Symphony Orchestra.

Several other notable pianists made their Stadium debuts during the years 1946 to 1964. Chilean pianist Claudio Arrau teamed with Efrem Kurtz and the Philharmonic in Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto on 5 August 1946. "The essence of Mr. Arrau's playing," wrote the *New York Post's* John Briggs, "is balance and lucidity. He plays with clarity, with elegant phrasing, with refined workmanship like that which used to make every recital by the late Josef Lhevinne a distinguished event."¹⁰¹ Robert Bagar also found much to praise in Arrau's refined playing but felt that the concert was hampered by what he considered to be Kurtz's poor conducting. "It was much too puny a support that he furnished the pianist," he declared.¹⁰² Arrau, like many major soloists a child prodigy, was a Chilean native who later settled in New York City. He brought a somewhat less spontaneous but still highly-regarded approach to the Romantic repertoire.¹⁰³

Nearly three summers later, on 27 July 1949, American pianist Leon Fleischer made his only Stadium appearance and Philharmonic debut performing both Franck's *Symphonic Variations* and Liszt's Second Piano Concerto accompanied by Monteux and the orchestra. Twenty-one years old at the time, Fleischer made a big impression. The *Herald Tribune* wrote, "To both the Symphonic Variations and the Concerto he brought the essential admixture of virtuosity and musical sensibility, investing them with unfailingly persuasive and multi-colored sounds."¹⁰⁴ The *Times's* Noel Straus shared the *Herald Tribune* critic's enthusiasm: "All of his playing was admirably sensitive, and the tone he produced acquired unusual limpidity, or as striking brilliance [*sic*], according to the requirements of the music in hand."¹⁰⁵ The concert attracted an estimated 3,500 listeners despite bad weather. Those who attended applauded Fleischer and Monteux for their exemplary music-making.

Lastly among this select group of pianists, Brazilian-born pianist Guiomar Novaes made the first of two Stadium appearances on 26 June 1958, playing the Schumann Piano Concerto with Alexander Smallens and the Stadium Symphony Orchestra. The performance inspired raves from the New York press, Harold

¹⁰⁰ Carolyn See, review of *Composition In Black And White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler*, by Kathryn Talalay, *Washington Post*, 24 November 1995.

¹⁰¹ John Briggs, "Arrau Plays Beethoven And Keeps it Cleantcut," *New York Post*, 6 August 1946.

¹⁰² Robert Bagar, "Arrau Plays Another 'B' at Stadium," *New York World-Telegram*, 6 August 1946.

¹⁰³ Robert Philip, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Claudio Arrau." London: Macmillan, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Leon Fleischer Soloist At Lewisohn Stadium," 28 July 1949.

¹⁰⁵ Noel Straus, "Fleischer Scores In Stadium Debut," *The New York Times*, 28 July 1949.

Schonberg stating, “She did not change a note of the music: those inner voices are there for all to play, but only Miss Novaes plays them.”¹⁰⁶ Miles Kastendieck was rhapsodic in his praise: “Those present will not soon forget how masterfully and how beautifully she played the cadenza of the first movement, how poetically the second, and how triumphantly the last. Here were simplicity, nobility, and spirit fused into superb music-making.”¹⁰⁷ Initially from Brazil, Novaes recorded extensively for Vox in the fifties.¹⁰⁸

The final concert of 1946 featured not one but *two* notable Stadium debuts. In an all-Beethoven concert led by Smallens, pianist Eugene Istomin performed the Fourth Piano Concerto while violinist Isaac Stern played the Violin Concerto. Both men met with favorable critical receptions and went on to make numerous Stadium appearances, usually performing standard fare. They would also team up on many occasions to play chamber music, sometimes in tandem with cellist Leonard Rose, himself a frequent Stadium performer.

The 1947 season featured the Stadium debuts of two other great violinists, neither one of whom made as many later Stadium appearances as did Stern. Both men attracted anywhere from 12,000 to 13,000 music lovers. On 11 July, Hungarian-born Joseph Szigeti performed the Brahms Violin Concerto with Smallens. Noel Straus wrote in *The Times*, “Mr. Szigeti’s tone was uncommonly rich, silky, and resonant, and admirably true to pitch. Technically, his playing was above reproach, but throughout the three movements of the concerto, virtuosity was never permitted to obtrude for its own sake.”¹⁰⁹ Less than one month later, French virtuoso Zino Francescatti took the stage for the Beethoven Concerto, Smallens again doing the baton honors. *The New York Times* was less than enthusiastic: “It was the very perfection of his rendition which gave it an air of earthlessness not altogether appropriate in Beethoven. Before the first movement was over, one almost wished he would make a mistake, to humanize the interpretation.”¹¹⁰ Both violinists played encores for their respective audiences.

A number of acclaimed vocalists, most of whom were associated with the Met, sang to Stadium audiences during the remaining two decades of summer concerts. Lauritz Melchior attracted large crowds with his blend of Wagner excerpts and light standards in his three Stadium appearances. With

¹⁰⁶ Harold C. Schonberg, “Guiomar Novaes In Stadium Debut,” *The New York Times*, 28 June 1958.

¹⁰⁷ Miles Kastendieck, “Pianist Guiomar Novaes Is Something Special!” *New York Journal American*, 28 June 1958.

¹⁰⁸ James Methuen-Campbell, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Guiomar Novaes.” London: Macmillan, 2001.

¹⁰⁹ Noel Straus, “Szigeti Attracts 13,000 To Stadium,” *The New York Times*, 11 July 1947.

¹¹⁰ *The New York Times*, “Zino Francescatti Heard At Stadium,” 5 August 1947.

Robert Lawrence conducting, African American soprano Dorothy Maynor sang “L’amerò, sarò costante” from Mozart’s *Il Re Pastore*, “Lia’s Lament” from Debussy’ *L’Enfant Prodigue*, “Depuis le jour” from Charpentier’s *Louise*, and unidentified songs, probably spirituals, in her only Stadium concert on 24 July 1948. The first half of the concert featured Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*. Robert Bagar wrote a rave review: “Frankly, I have not heard in a long, long time either of these works sung with such a wealth of Gallic feeling or such a quality of spontaneity as she displayed.”¹¹¹ The Stadium during these last two decades was also frequently graced by American-born Met stalwarts Richard Tucker, Robert Merrill, and Roberta Peters, who usually sang in programs devoted to Italian opera arias and excerpts. In addition, four other universally-acclaimed sopranos performed for the people during these waning years: Renata Tebaldi on 27 June 1957, Joan Sutherland on 23 July 1962, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf on 11 July 1963, and Anna Moffo on 9 July 1964. Tebaldi later was the featured soloist at the Stadiums’ final concert by a professional orchestra, singing a bevy of selections from Mozart to Verdi to Rodgers and Hammerstein on 13 August 1966.

By far the most attention-getting soloist during these last two decades was the American pianist, Van Cliburn. A few months removed from his triumph at the 1958 Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow, Cliburn was something of a matinee idol at a time when Cold War tensions were high. After a season in which bad weather caused a number of concerts to be canceled, Cliburn was rightly seen as someone able to attract an audience large enough to recoup most, if not all, of the financial losses.¹¹² And so a special concert was created for him on 4 August 1958, two days after the official last concert of the summer (the annual Rodgers and Hammerstein night), in a move that recalled José Iturbi’s memorable post-season debut of 23 August 1933.

At this special concert, Cliburn, with conductor Thor Johnson and the Stadium Symphony, performed the two works with which he won the competition: the Tchaikovsky First Concerto and the Rachmaninoff Third Concerto. The estimated audience of 22,500 demanded more and Cliburn played a total of seven encores, one of which was his own composition, *Nostalgia*. The result was a reception that the Stadium Committee wrongly expected for Sinatra fifteen summers earlier. As Alice Hughes reported in the 13 August edition of the *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*:

While the Texan was taking bows, a hulking young man wearing a luridly striped shirt, suddenly jumped upstage, and flung his arms about the slender pianist, who took it in stride, however. When the music was over and the crowds began to stream out, three teen-age girls clambered over the

¹¹¹ Robert Bagar, “Crowd Acclaims Dorothy Maynor,” *New York World-Telegram*, 26 July 1948.

¹¹² *New York Journal-American*, “Cliburn Plays Stadium Aug. 4,” 21 July 1958.



Figure 22: Van Cliburn attracted a full house soon after winning the 1958 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow.

Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic, Leon Levy Digital Archives (ID: 800-055-03-001).

parapets and darted into the wings where Van Cliburn had disappeared. What happened, we could not see. Hopefully, a bouncer was on hand to snatch the evening's hero from his too-friendly admirers.¹¹³

The hoopla notwithstanding, the critics seemed united in their praise for Cliburn. Ross Paramenter wrote in *The New York Times*:

Certainly, a classical pianist has never drawn that many persons to the stadium before.

¹¹³ Alice Hughes, "Great Night for Ivories When Van Plays the Piano," [*Poughkeepsie*] *New Yorker*, 13 August 1958.

What also was remarkable—in view of the month that Mr. Cliburn has been barnstorming with these same two concertos—was that he also gave them interpretations that were still magically fresh, still meticulous in their musicianship, and still marked by a degree of poetic inwardness that one would think difficult to maintain after so many appearances before consistently large audiences.¹¹⁴

Louis Biancolli shared Parmenter's enthusiasm, commenting in the *New York World-Telegram and Sun*:

The lanky 24-year-old Texan, playing the Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff concertos that brought him unprecedented fame in and all points west, was again in rousing form as a wizard of the keys.

It was easy to see why all Moscow went wild over this gifted American youngster. Last night's crowd, one of the largest in Stadium history, seemed determined to go the Russians one better. The acclaim verged on hysteria.¹¹⁵

Cliburn's career may not have fulfilled the promise of these early years, but he remained an acclaimed pianist all the same on the somewhat rare, later occasions in which he performed. Lewisohn Stadium was something of a haven for him, however. He attracted an estimated 20,000 on 1 August 1961 when he performed the Rachmaninoff Third again, with Vladimir Golschmann conducting.¹¹⁶ He performed the Tchaikovsky a second time with Alfred Wallenstein on 25 June 1963. During the last two seasons of Lewisohn Stadium, Cliburn branched out, playing the First Concertos of Liszt and Tchaikovsky on 12 July 1965, with George Schick conducting members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the Second Piano Concertos of Brahms and Rachmaninoff on 20 July 1966, with Joseph Rosenstock conducting.

Lewisohn Stadium was also the site of Cliburn's New York conducting debut, on 18 July 1964. In an all-Russian concert, Cliburn led the Stadium Symphony Orchestra in Kabalevsky's *Colas Breugnon Overture* and Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances*, then handled both the conducting and solo part in Prokofieff's Third Piano Concerto. According to the *Herald Tribune*'s William Bender, the concerto went off far more successfully than did the two orchestral works:

The audience's indifference to the first half was largely justified. The Kabalevsky is a piece of trash, and the Rachmaninoff, despite its peculiar macabre appeal, is little better. The performances, it must be said, were

¹¹⁴ *Kilgore (TX) News Herald*, "Van Scores New Gotham Triumph," 10 August 1958.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Louis Biancolli, "20,000 Cheer Van Cliburn," *New York World-Telegram*, 2 August 1961.

quite satisfactory, especially in view of the limited rehearsal time allotted by the Stadium, and in view of the fact that the Rachmaninoff is not a familiar repertory piece for the men of the New York Philharmonic who comprise the Stadium Orchestra. But the renditions lacked the brilliance and virtuosity to overcome the torpor of the music. That may not be fair to Cliburn, but it has to be reported. And if he is going to conduct, he has to be responsible for the repertory he chooses.¹¹⁷

The Rachmaninoff has since become a frequently performed piece; many of today's listeners have gone beyond the Russian master's most popular piano concertos to embrace some of his purely orchestral works, including all three of his symphonies. Whether due to his programming or other factors, Cliburn's conducting career did not last much farther beyond his 1964 appearances at Lewisohn Stadium, Robin Hood Dell, and several other venues.¹¹⁸

Epilogue: The Final Two Seasons

Toward the end of the 1964 season, the New York Philharmonic musicians signed a 52-week contract, thus making problematic their continued relationship with the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts.¹¹⁹ On 7 August 1964, the day before the final concert of the season, Mayor Robert F. Wagner announced that the Metropolitan Opera Association would take over the proceedings at Lewisohn Stadium for the next three seasons, with the city providing \$200,000 to help support the performances and to pay for an improved amplification system. Said Wagner, "These concerts are as important to me as they have been to two generations of Mayors of the City of New York. They have survived the depression and two world wars and are a major morale-building institution as well as a source of pleasure and refreshment for our people."¹²⁰ Also announced was another stunning development: brought down by ill health and overwork, the formerly tireless Minnie Guggenheimer would no longer be overseeing the concerts.¹²¹

Despite the loss of the Stadium's guiding spirit and the numerous problems facing the festival—the changing demographics of the neighborhood,

¹¹⁷ William Bender, "Van Cliburn at Lewisohn With the Baton in Hand," *New York Herald Tribune*, 20 July 1964.

¹¹⁸ Michael Steinberg, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Van Cliburn." London: Macmillan, 2001.

¹¹⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, "Stadium Future: Met's Talents Plus City Cash," 8 August 1964.

¹²⁰ *New York World Telegram and Sun*, "Met to Take Over Concerts At Improved Lewisohn Stadium," 7 August 1964.

¹²¹ *New York Post*, "Lewisohn Will Try Without 'Minnie'," 7 August 1964.

the mass exodus of white city-dwellers to the suburbs, the lack of parking, etc.—optimism marked these changes in procedure. The Met eagerly looked forward to having a place for summer opera for the masses, and top-rank, well-known performers from the Met were immediately engaged.¹²² Unfortunately, the hope and ambitions were short-lived. In January of 1965, City College announced plans for a new building and parking garage to be built on the site of the Stadium, which was to be razed.¹²³ Initially, the razing was planned for 1967, but did not take place until 1973. Nonetheless, City College's plans brought to a premature end the Met concerts at the Stadium, which only lasted for two seasons, 1965 and 1966.

As for those two seasons,¹²⁴ the fare was, not surprisingly, opera-dominated, encompassing both aria nights and concert versions of complete operas, although there were a few purely symphonic concerts. Both seasons featured a Gershwin night and a Rodgers and Hammerstein night.¹²⁵ Continuing the trend begun during the last decade and one-half of the Philharmonic Stadium concerts, pops and crossover concerts were frequently presented, performers including the likes of jazz songstress Ella Fitzgerald, comedian-pianist Victor Borge, and comedian-violinist Jack Benny. In both seasons, the Newport Jazz Festival scheduled Stadium concerts as well. In 1965, they showcased the Dave Brubeck Quartet and the Duke Ellington Orchestra in a 28 June concert. In 1966, six Newport Jazz Festival concerts were given. Along with Miles Davis, Duke Ellington and Lionel Hampton, folk artists The Pennywhistlers, Tom Paxton, Judy Collins, and Pete Seeger, among others, were featured on 12 and 13 July, while on 30 July a Latin night with Tito Puente, Ruth Fernández and Celia Cruz was presented.

Concerning the (somewhat) more high-brow affairs, Joseph Rosenstock was the most frequent conductor, leading symphonic and opera concerts. Of the Stadium conductors of previous seasons, only Rosenstock, Arthur Fiedler and Willi Boskovsky returned during these last two seasons. Fiedler led an All-American evening of spirituals, Copland's *A Lincoln Portrait*, with Marian Anderson narrating, and Edward MacDowell's Second Piano Concerto, with longtime Cleveland Orchestra keyboardist Joela Jones providing the solo. Boskovsky presided over a Viennese evening that featured Elizabeth Schwartzkopf. Cliburn appeared in both seasons. Otherwise, the proceedings

¹²² John Gruen, "Stadium Present: Nostalgia and Excitement," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 8 August 1964.

¹²³ Terry Ferrer, "City College's Five-Year Expansion Plan," *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 January 1965.

¹²⁴ All of the summer concerts are listed on the Met's website.

¹²⁵ Richard Rodgers shared the podium with Franz Allers on the 26 June 1965 Rogers and Hammerstein concert.

were usually led by the Met's staff conductors, including Fausto Cleva and George Schick, and several from other companies, including Kurt Adler, longtime music director of the San Francisco Opera.

Adler was on the podium for one of the most significant concerts from those last two seasons, which took place on 9 August 1966. The traditional twin-bill of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* featured twenty-five-year-old Plácido Domingo in his Met debut. *The New York Times's* critic described the results:

Plácido Domingo, the Mexican¹²⁶ tenor who won so much praise in his debut last spring with the New York City Opera in Ginastera's "Don Rodrigo," appeared at the stadium for the first time. He sang Turridu in the Mascagni opera and returned to sing Canio in "Pagliacci."

Mr. Domingo made as splendid an impression as Turridu and Canio as he did in the unconventional role of Don Rodrigo earlier this year. He has a sizable, warm voice, and intelligence, to boot, so that his singing was idiomatic without falling into bathos.

It was not a large audience. Apparently, the day-long gray skies discouraged many people from attending.

Also not present that day was the guiding hand of the Stadium Concerts from 1918 to 1964. On 23 May 1966, Minnie Guggenheimer passed away after a long illness at the age of 83. The *New York Times's* obituary writer summed up her legacy as follows:

For something over 40 years, Minnie Guggenheimer was a fixture in the musical life of New York. It was not so much because she founded the summer concerts at Lewisohn Stadium in 1918, though nobody would contest their importance. It was also because she ran them with a kind of flair and instinct for showmanship that made her the idol of the newspapermen, the joy of stadium-goers, and a scandal to grammarians. She was once described as having the speech habits of Casey Stengel out of Mrs. Malaprop.¹²⁷

That same obituary featured the following post-mortem from Leonard Bernstein:

Minnie—pioneer woman, old-fashioned heroine—has vanished with the era she glorified. And if this summer the parks of America overflow with music-lovers, it is in no small measure due to Minnie's guiding spirit.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Domingo was born in Madrid, Spain, but spent some of his early life in Mexico..

¹²⁷ *The New York Times*, Minnie Guggenheimer, 83, Dies; Founder of Lewisohn Concerts," 24 May 1966, 1 and 43.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

But of all that has been written about Minnie, perhaps the following, written by Seymour “Sy” Brody, sums her up best:

Her life was dedicated to making it possible for people to hear good music and for young artists to have the opportunity to perform. She unselfishly gave of herself to make these goals a reality.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Seymour “Sy” Brody, “Minnie Guggenheimer,” <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/guggen.html>.

Chapter 7

Postlude

After surveying the concerts given at Lewisohn Stadium from 1918 to 1966, the present writer feels amazement that these concerts had fallen into such oblivion, leaving it up to him, born as he was in 1970, to tell their story five decades after their demise. There was much to admire about the conductors, repertoire, and soloists involved. Also, for most of their existence, the concerts did not go in largely for fluff and tired warhorses. Even during the final two decades, many of the concerts remained serious in scope, while the lighter concerts often attracted large audiences made up of music-lovers many of whom undoubtedly came away pleased with the results. The Lewisohn Stadium Concerts had their off-nights and misfires from time to time as any concert series will. But they were a huge part of the New York cultural fabric during most of their run, attracting much attention from the press and top talent from the world's major performing venues. What follows are summaries of the conductors, symphonic repertoire, soloists and opera performances at the Stadium in the New York summers from 1918 to 1966.

Conductors

The Stadium Concerts began in 1918 mostly under the direction of local musician, Arnold Volpe, who, aided by a handful of guest conductors, directed orchestral players from the various New York orchestras in 1918 and 1919. He was replaced in 1920 by William Henry Rothwell who, in turn, was replaced by Victor Herbert and Henry Hadley the following summer. In 1922, the Philharmonic Society of New York became the Stadium orchestra, bringing with it two of its associate conductors, Hadley and Willem van Hoogstraten. The latter presided over the entire 1923 season by himself, undoubtedly an exhausting task. The point to be made here is that the Stadium Concerts began in a somewhat humble fashion, relying mostly on only a handful of conductors and taking time to develop enough of a reputation to attract a larger and more distinguished group of baton-leaders.

By the mid-twenties, the festival had unquestionably succeeded in achieving renown. In addition to Van Hoogstraten, the conductors included notable younger individuals like Fritz Reiner (in his New York debut) and Albert Coates, and well-established maestros such as Frederick Stock and Pierre Monteux. While Toscanini, Furtwängler, and Karajan, among many

others, never performed at the Stadium, the names of those who did were often impressive. Initially, most of the conductors were affiliated with Arthur Judson, the artists' manager and manager of the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and, throughout the twenties and thirties, the Stadium Concerts. Eventually, many conductors not tied to Judson correctly saw the Stadium Concerts as worthy of high status. They chose to lead the orchestra at a reduced rate in order to bring great music to the masses and, hopefully, pad their resumé in order to attain a notable position either with the Philharmonic or with some other reputable ensemble. In terms of the former prospect, conductors such as Rodzinski, Mitropoulos, Bernstein, and Mehta enhanced their careers at the Stadium enough to ascend eventually to the Philharmonic podium,¹ while Reiner, Ormandy, Paray, and Steinberg, among a number of others, found success elsewhere.

As the seasons proceeded, the need for a principal conductor vanished and the concerts were led by increasingly large rosters of guest conductors. Why this came to pass is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps the ability to attract major talent came at a price: many were willing to appear at the Stadium for a short engagement, but none was interested in taking too much time away from vacation. Also, other summer conducting prospects, either at a reduced rate or not, may have surfaced while, as time went on, the Stadium became antiquated, the neighborhood less desirable. Perhaps the punishing past seasons in which one conductor led for weeks on end without a break in the hot weather convinced the Stadium Committee that such long engagements were physically as well as musically impractical. Even so, the Stadium still attracted significant names during its final two decades, as well as a number of less notable talents seeking without success to ascend to more prestigious posts.

Among the conductors who graced the Stadium podium, possibly the most crucial to the Stadium's success included José Iturbi, who captivated Depression audiences with his keyboard talent as well as with his baton; Alexander Smallens, who maintained the longest consistent tie to the Stadium, leading virtually all genres of Stadium concerts from the thirties to the early sixties; and Pierre Monteux, who first appeared at the Stadium in the twenties and was a Stadium favorite throughout its final two decades.

But further mention must be made of the only true principal conductor in the history of the Stadium from 1922 on, the often-maligned Van Hoogstraten. The Dutch-American conductor must have worked hard to ensure the

¹ The youthful Lorin Maazel eventually took over the Philharmonic as well, his Stadium appearances distant memories for all involved.

continuance of the Stadium Concerts, despite the numerous bad reviews he received. Van Hoogstraten was the most frequent conductor throughout the twenties into the early thirties and probably pleased a good many audience members. The Stadium Concerts were seen as necessities during his tenure by critics and New Yorkers alike and for this, Van Hoogstraten deserves at least a decent amount of credit. In addition, some of his programs were among the most challenging in the Stadium's history. They included Mahler and Bruckner at a time when neither composer had established himself in the regularly performed repertoire, as well as Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* and a number of other twentieth-century compositions still considered tough on the ears by some even today. Van Hoogstraten also correctly saw Brahms as a welcome addition to the canon and frequently programmed his music at a time when he, too, was not fully established in the concert hall. Most importantly, he consistently championed American music throughout his long Stadium run. He was also perceptive enough to join with the Stadium audiences in recognizing a great composer in George Gershwin at a time when the critics were wont to mock the Brooklyn-born genius's classical creations. Sadly, the Stadium engagement proved to be arguably the highpoint of Van Hoogstraten's career as he failed to achieve much success in the remaining three decades of his life, which were spent largely in Europe. Van Hoogstraten saw a lot of potential in the American classical music scene, and the evidence is overwhelming that he made a conscientious attempt to become a part of it. It remained for others to earn the plaudits he so tirelessly sought for himself. Nonetheless, the Stadium Concerts attracted many listeners during his tenure and endured for nearly three decades afterwards. For this reason, Willem van Hoogstraten is worthy of mention today as well as of further scholarship.

One possible reason for Van Hoogstraten's lackluster critical reception was his tendency, like Rothwell before him, to program a number of works over and over again. Perhaps critics and Stadiumgoers grew tired of hearing certain compositions every season. Some pieces were heard more than once during a season. It may have been too much to ask for a conductor (and orchestra) to prepare wholly new programs for every concert of an eight-week, nightly summer season. Table 6.1 shows the number of times three compositions—Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony—were programmed by Van Hoogstraten during his seventeen seasons as the principal Stadium conductor:

Table 6.1. Performances of Wagner's Prelude to Die Meistersinger, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony between 1922 and 1938. * indicates "audience request" concerts.

	Wagner's Prelude to Die Meistersinger	Beethoven's Fifth Symphony	Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony
	8/3/1922	7/23/1923	7/31/1922
	7/5/1923	8/12/1923	7/5/1923
	*8/15/1923	7/3/1924	8/6/1923
	7/3/1924	7/10/1925	7/10/1924
	8/20/1924	8/30/1925	7/23/1924
	7/6/1925	7/7/1926	7/6/1925
	7/8/1926	8/30/1926	7/19/1926
	7/19/1926	7/6/1927	8/17/1926
	7/14/1927	*8/30/1927	7/18/1927
	*8/30/1927	7/12/1928	8/24/1927
	7/5/1928	*8/29/1928	7/24/1928
	7/10/1929	7/25/1929	7/13/1929
	*8/29/1929	*8/29/1929	8/27/1929
	7/7/1930	7/14/1930	7/7/1930
	8/21/1930	8/31/1930	7/11/1931
	7/21/1931	7/7/1931	7/16/1932
	6/28/1932	6/28/1932	8/14/1933
	6/29/1933	7/17/1933	8/9/1934
	8/22/1933	7/31/1935	7/30/1938
	8/1/1934	8/8/1937	
TOTALS	20	20	19

This programming might account for the Board's later decision to dispense with a "principal conductor" and rely on guests after Van Hoogstraten's final season of 1938, a decision which led to somewhat more variety in the Stadium repertoire.

Repertoire

I now return to the two key questions asked in the Introduction:

1. To what extent was the music performed at the Stadium representative of the canon as it developed over time?
2. What can be learned from the myriad attempts made during the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts at forming a distinctly American, as opposed to a European or Euro-American, musical identity?

As far as the first question is concerned, the Lewisohn Stadium repertoire greatly followed the winter season repertoire during the New York Philharmonic series' first two and one-half decades. It somewhat less resembled the winter repertoire of the era during the final two decades. The concerts began with largely pops-oriented programs, with light classics alternating with isolated movements from symphonies. By the mid-twenties, the concept changed.

With Van Hoogstraten leading the way, the concerts became more Carnegie Hall-like in tone and the Stadium audiences, far from the Philistines European composer/critics such as Pietro Mascagni portrayed them as being, turned out in greater numbers. There was a great demand for high culture in the days of flappers and Prohibition, and all who were affiliated with the Stadium Concerts rewarded concertgoers in kind.

Consequently, the concerts were initially built around Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner, augmented by a few works by Debussy, Strauss, and Stravinsky, and featured a respectable amount of recent music by Americans as well as by Europeans. Certain composers, like Rimsky-Korsakov, Weber, and even Wagner, were more popular in the early period of the Stadium than later on, while Brahms, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich, among others, grew in stature during the Stadium's last two decades. British orchestral music never caught on, despite various attempts at rectifying that situation throughout the Stadium's run. Serialists and ultra-modernists were shunned almost entirely. Large-scale choral works with texts on political themes right or left did not survive their era, their programmatic intentions ambitious, the music which supported them sometimes less than memorable. The foreign contemporary composers most represented at the Stadium came from the Soviet Union. This may possibly have been due somewhat to the American Left's admiration of the Soviet Union. But Prokofiev and Shostakovich have proven to this day to be popular in the concert hall, while the music of Khatchaturian and some of the other lesser Russian contemporaries have much to offer to those who like Prokofiev and Shostakovich.

The Stadium featured more popular concerts during its final two decades, with some of those concerts eschewing the Philharmonic altogether. These concerts often attracted large audiences, so it cannot be said that Guggenheimer and the Stadium Committee erred in judgment in scheduling these concerts. However, during these final two decades, more serious concerts were given than popular concerts. Even if these serious concerts tended to rely more heavily on warhorses than those of previous decades, one cannot dismiss these final concerts too readily. More often than not, the public was treated to great music at low-cost ticket prices to the end.

In terms of the second question, the evidence is overwhelming that the Stadium Concerts tried greatly to Americanize the concert hall. From the mid-twenties to the early fifties, contemporary American classical music was programmed at a respectable rate, from the Henry Hadley concerts of the twenties, to the Leon Barzin concerts of 1933, to the ambitious (and left-wing) programs of the World War Two era. During the final two decades, fewer concerts meant less experimentation. But even the Jazz Jamborees of

the late fifties were seen by some at the time as evenings of a different kind of American classical music, one that perhaps has not endured to the extent that such proponents as Leonard Bernstein may have foreseen in the fifties.² The Stadium Concerts, throughout most of their existence, had little to be ashamed of from the standpoint of American music, and may have performed a vital service for it if for one reason in particular: the establishment of George Gershwin as a major composer.

American composers featured at the Stadium most often tended to fall into two categories: those who embraced jazz and popular influences to some extent, and those who shunned them. Many of these composers, from both camps, have fallen into obscurity. Gershwin, whose music may have been the best package of the European tradition with jazz and Broadway, has proven to be among the most enduring American composers. Some critics during his lifetime failed to recognize his genius. The Stadium conductors and audience members did not concur. The result was a unique relationship between institution and artist, culminating in the annual all-Gershwin concerts given during the Stadium's final three decades. Since the end of the Stadium's concert series, Gershwin, despite his small number of classical creations, has remained a strong presence in the American orchestral repertoire. As recently as 2008, the New York Philharmonic and its music director, Lorin Maazel, undertook a controversial tour of North Korea, taking with them two noteworthy compositions: Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, which served as the major work on the Stadium Concerts' first program in 1918, and Gershwin's *An American in Paris*. *Rhapsody in Blue* is the first piece mentioned on the cover for the brochure of concerts mailed to subscribers for the Philharmonic's 2017-18 season, positioned above such works as Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*, Mahler's Fifth Symphony, and Bernstein's complete orchestral works.

The Stadium and its relationship to George Gershwin can thus be seen as representative of how the canon frequently works. Every generation produces a lot of music. It remains for only one or two composers to rise to the top and dominate his or her era. Mozart and Haydn, for all intents and purposes, dominate their era, Beethoven his era. At Lewisohn Stadium, the contemporary composer was Gershwin.

In the twenties and thirties, a number of significant attempts were made to Americanize the American concert hall. Organizations, such as the League of Composers and the International Composers' Guild, were formed. The major

² Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra*, p. 401. By 1966, Bernstein was less optimistic about the future of jazz in the concert hall: "Pop music seems to be the only area where there is to be found unabashed vitality, the fun of invention, the feeling of fresh air. Everything else suddenly seems old-fashioned: electronic music, serialism, chance music – they have already acquired the musty odor of academicism. Even jazz seems to have ground to a painful halt."

symphony orchestras, the Philharmonic among them, did their part before retreating into the European canon following Toscanini's tenure as Philharmonic principal conductor. In short, the twenties may have been among the best times for American composers to this day. So while it may seem preposterous to state that the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts, with its huge support for Gershwin which was taken up by the other later-formed festivals, may have made the greatest contribution to the cause, amazingly, such may have been the case.

The all-Gershwin concerts which took place throughout most of the Stadium Concerts' seasons prove that Gershwin's popularity was due largely to those who attended the festival. While all-Gershwin concerts were held at other such festivals, including a memorial concert at the Hollywood Bowl soon after the composer's death, the popularity of Gershwin's classical pieces was aided and abetted most at Lewisohn Stadium. While few of his works were actually premiered at the Stadium, the Stadium Concerts, more than any other institution, ensured their continued performances.

Among other American composers, Copland and Barber had their moments in the spotlight, and remain popular today, while their contemporary, Schuman, has yet to take hold. All three composers were heard at the Stadium—Copland even had an entire evening devoted to his music—but did not reach the level of Stadium popularity enjoyed by Gershwin.

In short, the Americanization of concert hall programming attempted by the Stadium Concerts was most reflected by music with popular elements: Gershwin's; arranged folk music performed by such groups as the Hall Johnson Negro Choir; the World War Two era populist works by Copland, Schuman, Robinson, and others; and the pure Broadway and jazz concerts of the final two decades. More often than not, American classical music was most liked by Stadium audiences when they saw at least a little of themselves in it.

Soloists and Opera

It took the better part of the twenties before big names performed concertos and arias at the Stadium. During that time, featured soloists were usually either local talents—some them winners of several Stadium talent contests—or relatives of the Philharmonic musicians, including Van Hoogstraten's wife, Elly Ney, or Philharmonic musicians themselves. In spite of these humble beginnings, a major figure was discovered in the person of contralto Marian Anderson, who, after winning the 1926 Stadium talent competition, went on to a distinguished career despite some early critics' misgivings and the prejudice of many against her skin color. Even in its early days, the Stadium Concerts were renowned enough to make or break the careers of aspiring performers.

By the beginning of the 1930's, Lewisohn Stadium was well-established as a venue for the performing arts and as a respected experiment in "Music for the People." International soloists, cognizant of the series's ability to aid their careers, came to the City College campus eager to share their art with the masses despite the reduced fees. New York was, and is, the preeminent culture center of the United States, and the Stadium Concerts were meticulously covered by the many local newspapers, as well as by such national publications as *Musical America*. For these and other reasons, engagements at the Stadium were highly prized by some of the world's finest soloists during most of the Stadium Concert's run.

During the Second World War, attempts were made at bringing in popular performers, probably in the interest of branching out beyond purely serious concerts. Curiously, the concerts by Frank Sinatra and Dinah Shore brought back disappointing box office returns. Nonetheless, these were baby steps towards the ultimate decision to sprinkle the Stadium programs with popular acts and Broadway music during the series' final two decades. Such acts as Harry Belafonte and the many Jazz Jamboree performers attracted huge turnouts and provided breaks from the increasingly routine, winter-season programs. They enabled the Stadium Concerts to endure a decade or so longer despite the many factors that led to its ultimate demise. Nonetheless, as shown by the success of the Van Cliburn concerts, and the appearances of the leading singers from the Met, the Stadium remained to almost its end a serious music venue much desired by solo performers and music-lovers alike. It also remained a launching pad for some young (and some very young) soloists as well.

As the later popular and light music concerts revealed the desire to offer alternatives to winter-concert orchestral fare, so did the opera concerts represent further attempts at branching-out. As with the conductors and the soloists, the first attempts at Stadium opera were tentative, with single acts and highlights featuring local singers as well as, in the case of the 1929 opera concert, major young conducting talent in the personage of Eugene Ormandy in his Stadium debut. Despite the inevitable shenanigans on and off the stage, not to mention the weather, these early concerts were enough to convince the management that opera had a future at the Stadium. Consequently, the Stadium presented major productions of operas even with the Great Depression nagging at the proceedings. By the end of the decade, the fully-staged and costumed operas proved too costly and too flawed artistically to have a future at the Stadium. Therefore, during the remaining two-and-one-half decades the festival settled for opera excerpt nights and full operas in concert. Despite the mixed results, the Stadium Concerts, and the many New Yorkers who supported them with donations, are to be commended for making this particular attempt at musical expansion, and for doing so at a time when money was scarce for many.

In short, the Stadium soloists and opera performers joined with the Stadium conductors and donors in ensuring that great music could be enjoyed by all at low rates. When one combines this with the fact that Minnie Guggenheimer and the members of the Stadium Committee worked without compensation, one cannot help but be amazed by the selflessness that existed within this particular enterprise. It is hard to imagine such selflessness existing in this day and age, what with the gargantuan salaries commanded by most of today's big names and the rising cost of tickets to major venues, among other concerns.

Lewisohn Stadium's Ultimate Legacies

Perhaps Lewisohn Stadium, like the Theodore Thomas Summer Concerts of the 1860s and 1870s that mostly emphasized light fare rather than winter repertoire, could best be seen as a populist solution to bringing great music to the masses during the summer months. With radio and the recording industries in their early stages during the Stadium's first decade, and television not yet available to the general public, and with the mass exodus to the suburbs having yet to take place, a large outdoor music venue may have been a necessity for audience and performers alike. The audience had few outlets for great music during the summer, while the performers recognized the Stadium Concerts as a vehicle for promoting their winter art, and, in some cases, their careers. Consequently, New Yorkers and many leading musicians had no problem making do with Lewisohn Stadium, and, indeed, many thrived on its offerings.

The Lewisohn Stadium experience, with its acoustic issues, rocky seats, overhead airplanes and frequent hot weather, was always an imperfect one. But for the better part of its run, it was apparently good enough for millions of music lovers. And even during its waning years, the Stadium remained a beloved locale for many, on occasion attracting large audiences despite many of the problems discussed throughout the fourth chapter of this book.

While great music has survived the often-tragic ups and downs of history, many of its institutions come and go. What was once indispensable for music lovers can become extinct within decades. So it was with Lewisohn Stadium, a highly valued part of the New York cultural landscape that, until now, has been largely forgotten, a distant happy memory for those who attended concerts there, perhaps, but unknown by the many who were not around during its existence. It is my hope that my investigation will bring back to the Stadium some of the noteworthiness that it has lost during the over five decades since its final concert.

Several of the twentieth century's finest conductors had their New York and American debuts at the Stadium. They, along with many established

maestros, presented to New Yorkers the finest music of the past and, often enough, the present as well. By the Depression era, some of the world's finest solo artists joined with them in performing this music. And, beyond the concerts themselves, the Stadium brought together New Yorkers from all backgrounds, religions, and political beliefs for a couple of hours of respite from the tensions and turmoil of everyday life. Such an enterprise is highly deserving of praise as well as further scholarship.

Also deserving of praise are the people who were involved in running the Stadium Concerts, most especially Minnie Guggenheimer, of course. They selflessly gave of their time and energy to provide great music to New Yorkers at low prices and did so without earning fees themselves. They recognized that fine music has the power to attract large audiences and, more importantly, that such music deserves to have such audiences. The Stadium Committee believed in their product and were proven correct time and time again, as demonstrated by the large public turnouts.

Four Other Summer Music Festivals

The Stadium Concerts may have died in 1966, but outdoor summer music continues elsewhere in such venues as the Hollywood Bowl, Philadelphia's Mann Music Center, Chicago's Ravinia Festival, and Tanglewood. None of these venues usually offer low-priced tickets for the concerts and there are no Minnie Guggenheimers running these various proceedings without compensation. All four are still in existence today, partially because, unlike Lewisohn Stadium, they are located in areas of their respective cities that have remained safe and undisturbed by airplanes and general city noises.

At roughly the same time that Lewisohn Stadium came into being, a similar project went underway three thousand miles west in Hollywood, California. Proving that culture had an audience far outside of the Northeast, a small number of men and women involved in the business and the arts founded the Theatre Arts Alliance (TAA) in 1918.³ The members of the TAA consisted of representatives from three different groups. One was the Theosophical Society at Korona in Hollywood, led by Christine Wetherill Stevenson. Another was a group of businessmen whose politics ranged right and left. The third was the Hollywood Community Sing. Tensions between the three groups existed from the beginning over artistic matters (such as the theosophists's utopian productions, which included plays and pageants inspired by Shakespeare,

³ Carol Merrill-Mirsky and Jeannette Bovard, *Hollywood Bowl – Souvenir Book* (Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, 2000), 5.

Sophocles and religious themes from the East and West) as well as over finances. Eventually, the businessmen would prevail. After Stevenson's untimely death, the Bowl eschewed the goals of the theosophists to the point of not mentioning them in its official histories from the first several decades.⁴

A year after the founding of the TAA, these people found an ideal spot for plays and concerts in Bolton Canyon. There lay a valley that had naturally good acoustics. Plays and concerts were produced at this location from time to time during the several years that followed. The Alliance was reorganized as the Community Park and Art Association in 1920. While a number of people were prominent in the running of the Association, the group's secretary, Mrs. Artie Mason Carter, who was also the leader of the Hollywood Community Sing, today gets most of the credit for the successful festival that still exists. Mrs. Carter is now known as the "Mother of the Bowl."⁵ Money for the concerts was raised by donations from the wealthy and from cardboard banks in the canyon where the less affluent donated "pennies for the Bowl." Mrs. Carter reportedly sold her only diamond ring to contribute to the Bowl.⁶ On a sad note, while most white audience members from all walks of life were welcomed during the festival's first several decades, racial minorities were not allowed in Hollywood after dark.⁷

One of the many reasons why the Hollywood Bowl still exists to this day (unlike Lewisohn Stadium) is that there have been many Hollywood Bowls. Various structures were built to work with the canyon, some more aesthetically pleasing than others, visually as well as acoustics-wise. While the canyon was initially acoustically fine, the crowds and the structures did adversely affect those natural acoustics over time. Hence, new shells had to be built and renovations needed to be made, the most recent renovation dating from 2003.⁸ In contrast, Lewisohn Stadium, with its neighborhood location and its cumbersome structure overall, had its changes from time to time but was not destined to last forever.

In 1921, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra began its association with the Bowl when its founder, William Andrews Clark, Jr., donated its services for the 1921 Easter Sunrise Service. On 11 July of the next year, the orchestra presented its first season of "Symphonies Under the Stars."⁹ A ticket cost 25

⁴ Catherine Parsons Smith, *Making Music in Los Angeles: Transforming the Popular* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 132-152

⁵ Merrill-Mirsky, *Hollywood Bowl*, 5.

⁶ Ibid., 6

⁷ Smith, *Making Music in Los Angeles*, 133

⁸ Ibid., 7-11.

⁹ Ibid., 6.

cents; currently, prices for admission range from \$20.00 to \$205.00.¹⁰ Their conductor on that occasion was Alfred Hertz. At the time, he was the music director of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and was the German repertoire conductor at the Metropolitan Opera House. From 1922 to 1934, he also served as the principal conductor of the Hollywood Bowl concerts. Hertz presided over more than 100 concerts at the Bowl during those thirteen seasons.¹¹ Interestingly, Los Angeles Philharmonic music director, William Henry Rothwell, attempted to talk Hertz out of participating prior to the first concert of 1922, claiming it was beneath his dignity and that it was bad for orchestras to play outdoors. Rothwell, who Hertz recommended for the Philharmonic post and who never forgave Hertz for leading the Symphonies under the Stars concerts, may not have enjoyed his one season at Lewisohn Stadium, which, as the reader may remember, came about largely thanks to Clark's large financial gift to Mr. Lewisohn.¹²

Many great names were associated with the Bowl concerts during their first several decades. Conductors included Stadium favorites Fritz Reiner, Albert Coates, and Pierre Monteux, as well as several greats who never conducted at the Stadium, Bruno Walter and one-time Los Angeles music director, Otto Klemperer. Keen on performing new music, the Bowl featured a 1928 performance of Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps*, conducted by Eugene Goossens. Arnold Schoenberg wrote *Fanfare for a Bowl Concert* for the Hollywood Bowl.¹³ Musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky was reportedly fired soon after concerts in which he programmed the ultramodern, including Varèse's percussion ensemble piece, *Ionisation*. However, one concertgoer, aspiring composer John Cage, went home pleased with the music.¹⁴ As with Lewisohn Stadium, yearly all-Gershwin concerts were staged in many seasons following his death.¹⁵ Later conductors included Leopold Stokowski, who briefly served as the music director of the Hollywood Bowl Symphony in the 1940s.¹⁶

The more long-lasting Hollywood Bowl orchestra was named, in fact, "The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra." Founded and led since 1991 by John Mauceri, the personnel is made up of non-Philharmonic members and specializes in film scores and musicals.¹⁷ In 1999, the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra became

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 13.

¹² Smith, *Making Music in Los Angeles*, 297

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵ Pollack, *Gershwin*, 125.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15. The Hollywood Bowl Symphony was the Los Angeles Philharmonic in disguise; the project lasted only several seasons.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17

the Bowl's resident jazz ensemble.¹⁸ The Bowl has featured staged and semi-staged operas from the 1920s on as well. In a move that reflected the influence of Tanglewood (as will be seen later on), Leonard Bernstein and Philharmonic president Ernest Fleischmann co-founded the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute for young instrumentalists and conductors in 1981.¹⁹

This all points to a trend which later affected the Stadium Concerts as well: the influx of popular music genres into festivals originally designed to concentrate on symphonic music. All of the festivals discussed in this book discovered that the standard German repertoire, fine though it is, was not enough to sustain a festival over the long haul. Consequently, diversity was needed in more ways than one. While the Hollywood Bowl can claim many recordings of distinction with Stokowski, Mauceri and others at the helm, perhaps one of the most famous Bowl-related recordings was *The Beatles At The Hollywood Bowl*, taped from concerts given by the Fab Four in 1964 and 1965.

In 1922, the largest city in Pennsylvania built the Lemon Hill Concert Pavilion in Fairmont Park not far from Henry Pratt's mansion. The pavilion was so named after the lemon trees that Mr. Pratt grew. During the next eight summers, concerts were given by fifty members of the Philadelphia Orchestra at this location. These concerts proved so popular that an open-air amphitheater with seating for 10,000 patrons was built on the same site in 1930. This amphitheater was named Robin Hood Dell after a nearby tavern. From then until 1948, the orchestra, reduced to 90 members and named the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra, ran the Robin Hood Dell Concerts themselves. Donors aided the orchestra in ensuring that ticket prices were lower than during the regular season.

The Robin Hood Dell Concerts was formally incorporated on April 25, 1935. However, much of great significance took place prior to that date. In 1930, Philadelphia Orchestra music director Leopold Stokowski and later Lewisohn Stadium regular Alexander Smallens both conducted, while future Philadelphia music director Eugene Ormandy made his Quaker City debut. Although he did not develop the relationship with Robin Hood Dell that Gershwin enjoyed with the Stadium Concerts, West Chester, Pennsylvania native Samuel Barber's *School for Scandal* Overture was premiered at the Dell in 1933. After 1935, important concerts included Gershwin evenings with Todd Duncan, the live performance debut of Judy Garland, and many nights with soloists who performed at the Stadium as well.

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Ibid., 17.

The deficit that had always existed eventually proved too much for the festival, resulting in the premature end of the 1948 season two weeks early. It was then that Philadelphia summer music was saved by one of the city's major philanthropists. Local businessman and music lover Frederic Mann soon developed what was known as the "Philadelphia Plan" which worked in tandem with the "Friends of the Dell." These "friends," along with the city government, saw to it that those who produced coupons printed in newspapers received free admission to the Dell Concerts. It has been estimated that about six million free tickets to orchestra concerts have been given away. The Robin Hood Dell Concerts were saved and continued for almost three additional decades without interruption. When enough Philadelphians felt the need for protection from bad weather, a 5,000-seat covered outdoor concert hall was built in 1976. Again, it was Mann who led the way towards its construction. Originally named Robin Hood Dell West, it has been since 1978 known as the Mann Music Center. To reflect the greater diversity in performing artists as time went on, the Center was renamed in 1997 the Mann Center for the Performing Arts. Robin Hood Dell still exists, featuring mostly non-classical concerts, although the Philadelphia Orchestra occasionally performs there.

As of 13 May 2014, the Center's website lists all of the Dell's performers, which included Metropolitan Opera stars and Zubin Mehta in his North American debut. While the Center has not developed relationships with contemporary composers similar to those enjoyed by the Stadium Concerts and Tanglewood, it has branched out in other fashions. Education and workshops remain parts of the center. Over time, non-classical events have been offered. Efforts were made for Mann Center audiences to enjoy excellent views of the Center City skyline while listening to music, an option not available to most American summer music festivals. While tickets to some orchestra concerts can be had for about fifteen dollars, most events have a higher admission charge, particularly for concerts featuring popular music.²⁰

Although Chicago's Ravinia Festival featuring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra began in 1936, summer music had been heard for several decades prior to that year in that beautiful stretch of land located north of the Windy City in Highland Park, Illinois. In 1902, the A. C. Frost Company purchased thirty-six acres of land in Ravinia near railroad tracks for the purpose of building an amusement park, a baseball diamond, and an electric fountain. Later on, a theatre was built where plays were staged. In 1905, the site was enlarged once more with the 1,420-seat Pavilion.²¹

²⁰ Richard E. Rodda, "75th Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Robin Hood Dell Concerts, Predecessor of The Mann Center for the Performing Arts", the Mann Center, accessed May 13, 2014, <http://manncenter.org/about/75-year-of-music-in-the-park/rodda>.

²¹ Percy B. Eckhardt, "From the Archives: A 1945 Perspective," in *Ravinia: The Festival at Its Half*

The Pavilion attracted notable talents even then, including future Stadium performers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, among others. By 1912, the festival offered performances by such orchestras as the New York Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Walter Damrosch, as well as Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in performances of orchestra music and single acts of grand opera.²² From 1919 to 1931, Ravinia became the home of summer opera in Chicago featuring choruses from the Metropolitan and Chicago Opera companies. Notable singers included Tito Schipa, Armand Tokatyan, and Gladys Swarthout, also later Stadium vocalists. Opera at Ravinia was ambitious, featuring standard works, rarely-heard operas, and contemporary operas—in the case of the latter, Deems Taylor's *Peter Ibbetson*.²³ Funding the festival mostly by himself was Ravinia Company vice president, Louis Eckstein who, along with his wife, assumed much of the deficit along with 100 guarantors.²⁴ Opera at Ravinia met an untimely end in 1932 due to the Depression and the grounds remained silent for four years.²⁵

That same year, Frederick Stock informed an Orchestra Hall audience that the Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians needed more work in order to survive.²⁶ This, combined with the concern of Ravinia residents that the land would be transformed into a cheap amusement park,²⁷ led to a rebirth of music at Ravinia. During the decades that followed, Ravinia focused primarily on performances by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. As early as the early forties, concerts featured much contemporary music, such as works by Barber, Bernstein, Carpenter, Copland, Harris, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Schuman, Shostakovich, and Taylor. In 1936, an all-Gershwin concert featuring the composer, in his only Ravinia appearance, and William Daly was held as well.²⁸ A rousing success, the finest conductors came to Ravinia, several of whom—Reiner, Rodzinski, Sir Georg Solti, and Jean Martinon later became Chicago music directors after debuting at the festival. As was later the case with Lewisohn Stadium, complaints about the staleness of the repertoire were heard, resulting in more contemporary

Century, ed. Fannie Weingartner. (Ravinia Festival Association, 1985), 15. A fire later burned down this Pavilion and a larger Pavilion replaced it in 1949.

²² *Ibid.*, 16-18.

²³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Claudia Cassidy, "Ravinia: A Charmed Life Then and Now," in *Ravinia: The Festival at Its Half Century*, ed. Fannie Weingartner. (Ravinia Festival Association, 1985), 33.

²⁷ Eckhardt, "From the Archives," " 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

music, plus popular music concerts from the sixties on.²⁹ A guarantee fund led by a large pool of guarantors resulted in ticket costs being kept low during the concerts' early days and coupon books were sold.³⁰ As of 6 April 2014, certain CSO summer concerts can cost as little as \$25.00 a person, according to the Ravinia website. Other tickets cost well above \$100.00. In addition to the Pavilion, Ravinia now encompasses several other venues for chamber music concerts and other functions. It also offers a few options for music education, similar to those at the Hollywood Bowl and Tanglewood.

The last of these three summer music festivals, Tanglewood, has proved to be arguably the most successful of all. Ironically, no effort has ever been made to keep the cost of ticket prices low. In addition, the festival is located far from any large city in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts and is accessible by car via small country roads. Nonetheless, millions of music lovers keep Tanglewood in business summer after summer, all of them willing to buy tickets to either sit in the Music Shed or lie on blankets in the lawn outside of the Shed. The scenic location is a factor as well.

Tanglewood was conceived by the wealthy for the wealthy. In the early thirties, a committee of wealthy women decided to create an American Salzburg in the country.³¹ Many were New Yorkers who had summer homes in the area. They were led by Gertrude Robinson Smith. Even with the Depression looming over everybody's heads, many of the upper class embraced the plan.³² During the summers of 1934 and 1935, Henry Hadley and the New York Philharmonic were featured in two weekend concerts, performing in a riding ring.³³ Interestingly, the committee had hoped that the Philharmonic would choose Tanglewood as its summer home. However, the orchestra was happy with Lewisohn Stadium and chose to remain there.³⁴ Given the orchestra's repeated failures at finding a summer home since they left the Stadium in 1964, as well as the huge success of Tanglewood, one can only wonder if the Philharmonic has ever regretted this decision.

Soon after the Philharmonic declined their offer, the ladies turned to the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra, and its longtime music director, Serge Koussevitzky, were extremely enthusiastic and came onboard. In 1936,

²⁹ Robert C. Marsh, "The Festival at Its Half Century," in *Ravinia: The Festival at Its Half Century*, ed. Fannie Weingartner. (Ravinia Festival Association, 1985), 69-74.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

³¹ Andrew Pincus, *Tanglewood: The Clash Between Tradition and Change* (Boston: University Press, 1998), 3-4.

³² *Ibid.*, 4.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

the BSO performed three concerts in a tent. Koussevitzky wanted a real concert hall for obvious reasons. In the winter of 1936-37, Mrs. Gorham Brooks and her aunt, Miss Aspinwall Tappan, offered an unoccupied estate in Lenox and Stockbridge. The property was called "Tanglewood," a name given by Nathaniel Hawthorne when he was a guest of the Tappan family in the early 1850s. The concert hall project was slow to develop because of the Depression. However, during one of the five BSO concerts given in the summer of 1937, again in a tent, a furious rainstorm resulted in audience members becoming wet and muddy. At intermission, when Robinson Smith appealed for money to build a concert hall, \$30,000 of the needed \$100,000 was raised on the spot. The next summer, the five-thousand-seat Music Shed opened to rave reviews from all.³⁵

Tanglewood was destined to be more than just an outdoor concert hall in the Berkshires. In 1940, Koussevitzky founded the Berkshire (now Tanglewood) Music Center for talented music students from all over the world. Aaron Copland was appointed chairman of the composition department, a position he held for over two decades. Gregor Piatigorsky was the first chamber music head. Leading the conducting department was Koussevitzky and a very young Leonard Bernstein. In 1941, the Theatre-Concert Hall, which was replaced by Seiji Ozawa Hall in 1994, was opened for the purpose of presenting the Music Center's concerts and opera. Most notable among the early student performances was the American premiere of Benjamin Britten's opera, *Peter Grimes*, conducted by Bernstein. Britten was present for the performance.³⁶

Activities at Tanglewood were slowed down somewhat by World War II.³⁷ From 1946 on, Tanglewood has remained as active a festival as any in the world, featuring contemporary concerts, opera from time to time, and superstar performers who command high figures for playing the same handful of works. Tensions between those who want high art and those who are happy with big names have existed and always will. Tanglewood seems to have done quite well in pleasing both camps. Since 1980, popular acts have been presented as well. All of the summer festivals I have examined, at some point during their existences, decided that fine though Beethoven and Brahms are, musical diversity is needed in order to please the masses and maintain financial and artistic solvency.³⁸

The Stadium Concerts proved that great music transcends cultural boundaries and that anyone, regardless of background or skin color, can respond to it. They also showed that music can find an audience without significant

³⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

³⁶ Ibid., 5.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 9.

governmental assistance and the major corporations of the kind that promote and distribute today's popular music. As Frank Sinatra proclaimed, the Stadium Concerts were "real democracy at work." As with democracy, the festival was often messy, but it worked. Despite the problems particular to New York City, such as the airplanes flying over the Stadium on their way to LaGuardia Airport, the street noises, the relocation of many to the suburbs, etc., that contributed to its demise, it can serve as a model to other American music institutions of today and tomorrow in many ways, artistically and otherwise.

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